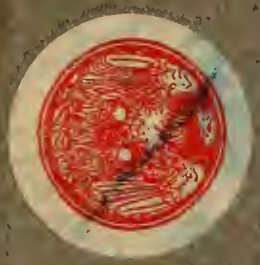

At the Sign of the Ginger Jar & Some Verses Gay and Grave

RAY·CLARKE·ROSE

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AT THE SIGN OF THE GINGER JAR

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SOME VERSES
GAY AND GRAVE

BY

RAY CLARKE ROSE

CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG & CO.
1901

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TO

VICTOR F. LAWSON

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Dear stranger, step inside my shop;
I have some curiosities
To interest you if you stop —
Rare antiques and monstrosities;
Round masks with features humorous,
A few with looks tyrannical;
New toys, and nicknacks numerous,
And some of them mechanical.

Of posies, too, I have a few,
Still fragrant of the country side;
Also some laces — old and new —
And woven patterns long and wide;
Some girlish portraits that may chance
To glance at you demurely;
Some relics of old-time romance,
All packed away securely.

Of course I have sweetmeats to sell;
My ginger dainties are unique,
And all my goods are fresh and smell
Of savory flavors far to seek.
If chance you wish to patronize
My shop, here's welcome to you;
But if you should my wares despise,
Pass on — I'll never rue you!

POEMS OF SENTIMENT AND REFLECTION

Rondel

Love is a wanderer, wayward seeming,
  Like a bee that roams o'er the flowered plain;
  But aye with an eagerness almost pain
He flies to his nest for rest and dreaming.

On fancy's zephyrs, his gold hair streaming
  Like sunlight sifted through rifts of rain,
Love is a wanderer, wayward seeming;
  But ever he comes to his own again!

Cometh he, then, with his sweet eyes gleaming
  With a passionate joy he would not restrain;
  With increased treasure he comes amain.
Love is a wanderer, wayward seeming,
  Like a bee that roams o'er the flowered plain.

Patience

I put her letter by, because,
With dimming eyes, I needs must pause

To fashion somewhat of her smile
From memory, a little while;

To feel again the gentle touch
That made me wonder overmuch

If such a soft caress of love
Were not for ransomed ones above,

Instead of for my earthly bliss —
This handclasp sweeter than a kiss.

I put her letter by a bit
To muse and marvel over it,

As something rare beyond the ken
Of common thought and mortal men;

As something that the tender years
Have traced with not ungrateful tears.

A sweet good-by, it is, to say
She 'll meet me "later in the day."

And still I wait! And still I wait!
The years have gone — the day is late! —

A shrine of myrtle for her dust —
A letter yellowed with the rust

Of tears — a prayer to understand
Her signal from the Peaceful Land.

I put her letter by! — I know
Its promise will be kept, and, so,

Through misty eyes my soul shall smile
And wait in patience yet awhile.

Compensation

In the night of doubt and error
Life assumes a shape of terror,
  Beside which death seems joy indeed;
But in the dawn of truth and faith
Despair becomes a helpless wraith —
  A cloud that shades us in our need.

May Song

The ardent woodbird seeks his mate
  And tells his hopes in trembling song;
Dear love, my heart, no less elate,
  Sings of you all day long!
The woodbird shapes his fragile nest
  Among the branches, leafless yet,
  Nor fears the maple will forget
To shelter well its guest.

I have no mansion grand for you;
  My hands must rear the home we share;
With life so young, our nest so new,
  And love to make it fair,
May we not trust that time will bring
  The richer shelter — that the days
  Will ever higher hopes upraise,
And still our hearts may sing?

The woodbird's faith is firm and high;
  Joy wingeth ever by his side;
Sweetheart, with your dear presence nigh,
  I fear not storm or tide.

The summer cometh to eclipse
With bloom and green the striving soil;
Your smile shall garnish all my toil,
And heaven kiss my lips!

Aftermath

We laughed and loved as the summer went,
And were content;
We sighed when love and the year grew cold,
That year of old.
'Twixt the laugh and the sigh was a paradise
Aglow with the light of your radiant eyes —
A place of cloudless dreams and skies,
Till we were wise!

Still summer comes with its balminess,
But my heart brims over with vague distress;
I miss the summer past and, yes,
Your old caress.
Dear love of old, is your heart as true
As mine to you?
Is to-day the past's equivalent —
Are you content?

Serenade

From mountain heights fair Echo calls
And bids the world rejoice;
Thus on my thought's high places falls
The echo of your voice.

In cavern deeps the crystal light
Of day seems strangely fair;
Your love illumines my heart's sad night,
As if God placed it there.

The south wind comes with its caress,
And joy springs into bloom;
Your kisses melt my cold distress
And rose-tint all its gloom.

The myriad stars of night's vast blue
Are spotless and divine;
Each represents a gift that you
Possess, sweetheart of mine.

I have no kingly realm — no gold —
No hosts at my command;
Yet all the world is mine to hold,
When I but hold your hand.

A minstrel's frail, discordant notes
  Are all my lips can give;
My love would fill a thousand throats
  With song that aye should live.

A Presentation

Here 's a clove carnation, dear,
Brightest blossom of the year;
Short of stalk, but blooming well
In my overcoat lapel.
Let me put it in your hair,
Like a kiss imprinted there —
Like a blushing, shy caress,
Simply that — and nothing less !

'T is of color hard to tell;
Say a scarlet-cardinal,
Flaming with the fragrant fire
Of a devotee's desire.
Take it, lady, as a seal
Of the interest I feel —
Summer's token, and the same
Of my heart's consuming flame !

Parting Song

The moon elves dance upon the lake;
The laughing wave crests lilt in play;
A balmy zephyr blows to take
My love away!
My love, who sails across the tide
In search of gold and gear for me—
My love, and all my world beside—
Across the sea!

The night is spangled bright with dust
Of worldshine in a silver shower.
O gleaming stars, I put my trust
In you this hour!
By you my true love steers his bark;
By you he pledged his troth to me.
Oh, guide him truly to his mark
Across the sea.

A wild bird flickers through the night
With intermittent mournful cry,
And my sad spirit mocks its flight
With many a sigh.

Perhaps the wild bird is my heart,
For, oh! I know 'tis gone from me —
'T is gone to take my true love's part
Across the sea.

Dear zephyr, blow with tenderness,
And kiss my dear love's bonny brow;
Dear stars, give him the long caress
I waft you now.
O nights, be brief, and brief the days
That keep my love away from me,
And heart, be near him while he strays
Across the sea!

Come back, my love, my sailor lad,
For gold and gear are worthless dust.
My long, long solitude is sad -
Come back you must.
Come back, sweetheart, on lightning wings,
Though bringing but a kiss for me.
Your smile is more than wealth of kings
Across the sea!

Homing Song

The waves come racing to my boat
With messages from you, my love,
And all their cadences denote
You 're true, my love.
Your soldier lad is sailing back
To you and to his home again,
No more to lead a fierce attack,
Or roam again.

No gold have I to buy you gear,
No treasure save my heart for you,
And wealth of kisses — kept, my dear,
Apart for you.
But ah! I know your hair is gold
And turquoise are your eyes, my own,
And in your love a worth untold
There lies, my own.

The tumult of the war has passed,
The nations are at peace, my sweet;
The tumult in my heart doth fast
Increase, my sweet.

For all the way is long and lone
  That I must travel yet to you,
And oh! I hunger to the bone
    To get to you!

My dearest one, be kind and wait
  As truly as I sigh for you,
For I should deem it happy fate
    To die for you.
My shoulder-straps and brave success
  Shall gather fame about you, dear,
But they are less than nothingness
    Without you, dear.

O ocean, bear me back with speed
  To greet the girl who waits for me,
And fortune fashion to my need
    The fates for me!
I ask no gift beyond the ken
  Of humbleness—I miss my love;
I only ask to see, and then,
    To kiss my love.

The Living Voice

Her voice! Like a tone from a thread of gold
On a shield of silver it thrills the soul—
Like the sigh of the sea when the night is old
And the dawn star floats in its purple bowl—
Like the crooning night adrift in the spray
Of crimson and gold on the shores of day!

Her voice, like a theme of passionate things—
Like a song in a dream of delight, unguessed—
Like the mythical music of angels' wings,
Seems like a strain from a hymn of the blessed—
Seems like an echo of the voice of her
The first man loved as a worshiper!

May her dear voice sing to me so through the years,
With its melody marvelous, always new—
With its music, distilled of delight and tears,
As the days are dark or the skies are blue—
May it be such a song as Eve first sung
To the love of her love when the world was young!

Memory

When first we quaffed love's jeweled cup
  Its golden nectar, bitter-sweet,
  Seemed sparkling with life's ardent heat
In deathless brilliance flaming up.

We vowed the future should not hold
  A joy, a grief, a hope unshared
  By our twin souls, and calmly dared
The Fates to make our love turn cold.

An empty cup, upturned, I keep—
  A broken trinket, jewel-set—
  No more with brimming nectar wet;
No more with fragrant promise deep.

We drained the glass too fast, I fear;
  We vowed too often and too much.
  And so, we find we may not touch
The thrilling draught once rich and near.

Still, in the broken cup I prize
  A gleaming jewel that outshines
  The glow of love's resplendent wines,
The passion of your magic eyes.

'Tis memory, set in burnished gold,
And burning with a changeless fire
Caught from love's slowly fading pyre;
The sunset of the days of old.

Sweet Clover

Over and over the scent of sweet clover
Lingers and lures like a half-lost dream,
And seems, under cover of night, like a lover,
To croon to my soul of an old, old theme.
Back from the heydays of childhood's playdays,
Back through the dust and the dearth of the years—
Soft as the fall of a dead leaf—the call of
A voice flutters out of the past—and its tears.

Sweet clover, delicious, if longings that wish us
In the garden of youth could compel, I would lie
In the far wildernesses of blooms whose caresses
Showered joy on my heart where they smiled at the sky;
Where the hollyhocks, standing, still, stately, commanding,

Kept guard over mignonettes, myrtle and all
Of the old-fashioned flowers that gladdened the hours
I dallied and dreamed by the home garden wall.

From the vase where she set them, saying, "Soon you 'll forget them,"
The sweet-clover blooms send their fragrance to me;
But the dear one who placed them, the hands that embraced them,
Are lost to my sight and forever shall be.
Yet over and over the scent of sweet clover
Lingers and lures like a half-lost dream,
And seems, under cover of night, like a lover,
To croon to my soul of an old, old theme.

Spring Song

When a song is in the wind
  And the sapling whispereth
  As a child will catch its breath,
Telling good news long confined,
Then I know the spring is come
  And its hosts with full accord
  Soon will praise the sun, their Lord,
In a mild delirium.

Once again the high-arched door
  Of life's vernal temple swings
  Open, and gay blossomings
Strew its green mosaic floor;
Once again the choristers
  Of the erst chill solitudes
  Pipe their anthems in the woods,
Filled with humble worshipers.

Ah, I know that life is fair
  When the sigh of spring is heard,
  And my lonely heart is stirred
By the music echoed there!

But I know that love is blind,
For I still may not rejoice —
No! I miss a loved one's voice
When a song is in the wind.

For the Sake of the Song

For the sake of the song would I sing to-day,
As the goldfinch warbles its notes awing,
As the brown thrush hides in the brush to sing
And the bluebird pipes in the fields of May.

Let the prophet voices preach and pray
Where the wheels and heels of traffic ring;
For the sake of the song would I sing to-day
As the goldfinch warbles its notes awing.

Ay, free as the mist in a sun-kissed bay,
When the dawn peeps over the hills of spring,
Would my soul rise high to its caroling —
For the sake of the song would I sing to-day,
As the goldfinch warbles its notes awing!

The Tremolo

I have seen her to-night in a vision,
Pour out from her beautiful hands
A torrent of music elysian
That my innermost self understands.
In a whirlpool of harmonic rapture
My senses were swept with delight,
And my heart, singing loud at its capture,
Became her glad captive to-night.

With the joy of a sanctified spirit
I cling to the glorious dream;
And the song — I forever shall hear it,
And thrill with the throb of its theme!
For the trend of its cadence uplifted
My mind from the sordid and vile,
Till my soul seemed unfettered, and drifted
At peace in the dawn of her smile.

Oh, those hands so insistent and slender!
Would they nestle in mine at repose?
Oh, her face, so bewitching, so tender,
And sweet as the first fragile rose!

Sentiment and Reflection

Will it ever light up with high pleasure
To greet me, to welcome, caress?
Would she be my dear love and my treasure?
I doubt, in distress.

Nightingale's Serenade

A song in my heart pipes ever and ever
So sweet! So sweet!
But a song that my voice may never, ah! never
Repeat! repeat!
Oh, the love of my love is in every beat
Of the song that my voice may never repeat,
My sweet! My sweet!

Over your bower I sing tonight,
My own! My own!
But the song is a wraith of our old delight,
For lone, alone!
I flutter and sigh in the starry zone,
I flutter and sing alone, alone,
My own! My own!

A Outrance

When rhymsters prate
With words elate
Of sweethearts upright and sedate,
And warble of
The ones they love
As if they hailed from realms above,
The wise enough have eyes enough
To see through all that sort of stuff.

Say, why should I sing of an angel of light
When my heart is aflame with the fires of earth;
When the girl I adore is a sprite of the night —
Just a child of the flesh in a garment of mirth?
Away with conventional praises, and such!
To the thrill of her kiss will I fashion my song;
To the passionate glance of her eyes and the clutch
Of her beautiful arms, so insistent and strong!

To the maid of my dreams, when to dream is to live
With the red pulse resistlessly making the pace,
Will I drain this ripe cup of my wishes, and give
The whole of my soul for a single embrace?

Nay, lisp me no words of a love that is calm,
Of devotion that feeds upon cereal food;
'T is the hypocrite's song, and I long for the psalm
Of my dear when she calls in her amorous mood.

You will find her, I know, in the drawing-room's glare,
Where she poses, immaculate, sexless and wise,
Save for the red glow that burns low in her hair
And the imperious gleam of her glorious eyes.
But, at last, when the flight of the dance is at best,
Ah! Then will I hold her, and mold her, and tease;
And she 'll tremble and glow like the rose at her breast—
Like an ardent red rose in a tropical breeze!

She Came to Me

She came to me
Like a vision of immortality!
Out of the night
Of my sorrowful search and earthly blight;
She came like a dream of the far-off sea
That silvers the shores of eternity—
God's angel came,
And my soul leaped high in a vestal flame,
But my face burned red
With the scarlet fires of new-lit shame;
For sweet were the loving words she said,
And pure the trust I read in her eyes;
For lo! she was love's great sacrifice!
There in the night
Of my evil past she sang to me—
Sang to my heart of a new delight;
And never a word could I make reply,
And never a word could I answer why;
For my shame choked high and death became
A coveted balm to soothe my shame!

She sang of love that purifies
Till my soul, at the gates of paradise,
Burned white in the light of her golden eyes,
And the past was lost in the radiant flame!

Horace to Chloe

(Book I., Ode XXIII.)

Nay, Chloe, child! be not so wild,
  Nor, like a frightened fawn, thus fly me!
No wild beast I to rend you — why,
  I 'm harmless, dear one, only try me!

No young doe strayed in hill-top glade,
  Far from its mother, would be wilder
Than you are now; and yet, I vow,
  My wishes hardly could be milder!

So, Chloe, dear, pray do not fear,
  But heed my harmless tendernesses
And learn that you may well eschew
  A mother's care for Love's caresses!

Day Dreams

What time is like the glad springtime,
When all the trees are green and shady,
And whisper with a balmy chime
Above where you 're asleep, my lady?
What dreams are like the sweet day-dreams
That drift into your sylvan bower,
Waywardly, like the light that gleams
In intermittent golden shower?

What song is like the wild bird's note
That lilts from where he sings above you?
The song he sings with swelling throat
But tells, sweetheart, how much I love you.
The arbor vine its tendrils throws
Across your hammock softly swinging,
And from your curls a faded rose
Has dropped and in the grass is clinging.

What wonder that the arbor vine
Should strive to clasp its arms about you?
What wonder that the rose should pine
And droop and die at last without you?

With bashful touch the zephyr twines
  Its fingers in your tangled tresses,
Near where your red lips' curving lines
  Reflect the sunlight's warm caresses.

The sunlight steals you kisses, dear;
  To do the same I have a craving.
The zephyr has your curls, I fear;
  But one, I hope, for me you 're saving.
Awake, my love! the dial's hand
  Is racing toward the evening hours.
Awake and leave the wonderland
  Of dreams for this fair world of flowers.

The Place of Joy

The pilgrim sought the garden of delight
And wandered through doubt's desert lands and night,
  Until, heartsore and broken by the quest,
He moaned the cynic's creed of earthly blight.

Then spake the Voice: "Be satisfied and rest;
Then will the long-sought goal be manifest—
  Joy blooms not in the vale or on the height
Until contentment blossoms in the breast."

Lite Pendente

The leaves lie dead about my feet —
  Fair summer's mantle cast aside;
And shrill the glooming winds repeat
  The moaning of my heart's sad tide.
I know not where the days have sped;
  I only know that long ago
A dear One kissed my lips and fled.

The blinding sleet of winter's woe
  Beats on me with a friendly touch,
And mingles with my tears, that flow
  Unceasingly and overmuch —
A joy of old each tear I shed;
  But may it be through tears I 'll see
The sunshine and be comforted?

Dead, all the bloom and harvest time,
  And all the hopes and high delight;
And, over all, the fatal rime
  Of winter's chill and love's sad night —
Oh, tell me, lost one! dost thou tread
  The joyous ways of perfect days,
Or art thou, as thou seemest, dead?

My Poor Neighbor

My neighbor hath a lordly pile —
A palace reared of polished stone,
In which he lives in lavish style,
Alone.
I look upon his wealth and smile
In rare content, while on my knee
A wee one rides and crows at me —
My own!
My neighbor's is a regal place;
But, oh! it hath no laughing face
Of childhood there for sympathy.

My neighbor's garden blooms are fine;
They rise in hedges topped with gold,
And all their radiance is mine.
I see their blossom sheaths unfold;
I breathe their fragrance day by day,
And, aye, they nod and smile my way,
Though I be poor.
My neighbor's lawn is green and wide,
And here and there a lofty tree
With spreading arms stands to divide
Its store of graceful shade with me;

And oh! I'm sure
That when the verdant days are gone
New charms will greet me from the lawn!

My neighbor hath a host of cares,
For he must guard his costly wares
And golden hoard;
While I, crowned with domestic bliss,
May gain a fond parental kiss
He can't afford.
I and my neighbor never meet,
An alley separates our lands;
My house is in a modest street,
His on the drive — see, there he stands!
Poor man; he's naught but gold and gear;
While I have home — and you, my dear!

Follies of the Wise

A man is a fool in his youth, my son,
And none is wise till his course be run;
For a woman's eyes or the gleam of gold
Will dazzle his wits till he 's old — so old!
And the flirt of a skirt or the thrill of a song
Will soften his heart for long — so long!
And a woman's sighs or a woman's tears
Will make him a slave for years and years.

A man is a fool at worst — and best —
And his life is a grim and a guilty jest,
With a gush of joy or a gasp of pain,
And the round of his labor, and over again;
But his toil grows less and his griefs depart
When he feels the throb of a comrade heart,
And his life is a beautiful vision while
He lives in the light of a loved one's smile.

A man is a fool, for his pride and greed
Will take him beyond his farthest need,
And the bauble of wealth or the bubble fame
Will he seek to his grief or lasting shame;

But a woman's love is of all the earth
Man's rightful gift and of greatest worth,
And who studies the world in his dear love's eyes
Is happy indeed, and wise — so wise!

A Child is Born

"A child is born!" the magi cried, and then
The Voice spake softly in the hearts of men:
"A child is born whose heritage is such
That he who sees and knows must love Him much,
And he who doth obey this Prince of Peace
Shall know the law that rules the soul's increase.

The Many saw the Child but turned away
And said: "A plaything for an idle day!"
The Few looked in his eyes and saw therein
The sum of life and death, of good and sin.
Then spake the Voice: "This is the Savior — Love,
Lord of the earth beneath and heaven above."

An Old Lady

I know an old lady of over fourscore,
Who is sweet as the blossoms that bloom by her door.
Though the frost of her winters has silvered her hair,
It still has some lusterful shadows to spare;
And the light that burns low in her spectacled eyes
Will often blaze up in a way to surprise;
For there 's youth in her heart, though there 's age in her face,
And her mind retains all of its maidenly grace.

This charming old lady resides in a town
Where the flowers look up and the maples look down,
And the homes have their orchards and vineyards and lawns,
And the days have most radiant sunsets and dawns;
There 's a maundering river that ceaselessly rills
And a lake like an opal set low in the hills;
There 's a one-story cot in an old apple grove,
And there lives this darling old lady I love.

The yield of her low-laden trees and her vines
Is rarer than tropical fruits and fine wines;

For she gives it a flavor with smile and kind thought
That is free as the sunshine, but cannot be bought.
Her flowers grow gayly in shadow or sun,
But the rose in her cheek is the prettiest one,
And her delicate heart that has blossomed for years
Sheds fragrance distilled from her joys and her tears.

Religion

"My heart is dead to love," I said,
And then in study bowed my head;
But where I sought the higher thought
I found that loveless life was naught.

In starry sphere or frailest spear
Of grass was love, serene and clear;
Then, on the clod where grief had trod,
I knelt in fervent love of God.

Walt Whitman

[A Monologue.]

I am no slender singing bird
That feeds on puny garden seed!
My songs are stronger than those heard
In ev'ry wind-full, shallow reed!
My pipes are jungle-grown and need
A strong man's breath to blow them well;
A strong soul's sense to solve their spell
And be by their deep music stirred.

My voice speaks not, in lisping notes,
The madrigals of lesser minds!
My heart tones thunder from the throats
Of throbbing seas and raging winds;
And yet, the master-spirit finds
The tenderness of mother earth
Is there expressed, despite the dearth
Of tinkle tunes like dancing motes!

My hand strokes not a golden lyre
Threaded with silver—spider spun!
The strings I strike are strands of fire,
Strung from Earth's center to the Sun!

Thrilled deep with passion, ev'ry one!
With songs of forest, corn, and vine;
Of rushing water, blood, and wine;
Of man's conception and desire!

But listen, comrade! This I say:
In all of all I give my heart!
With lover's voice I bid you stay
To share with me the better part
Of all my days! nights! thoughts! and start
With far-spread arms to welcome you,
And we will shout a song so true
That it shall ring for aye and aye.

Sacrifice

There are no heights we may not reach;
  There are no depths we may not touch;
And aye the Sacred Voice shall teach:
  "Who rises high shall forego much!"

For long I wooed my First Desire —
  It foiled me in its teasing flight;
And then I left it, to aspire —
  It came and joined me on the Height!

Nocturn

Whispering voice of the modest night,
  Soft as the sigh of a falling leaf,
  Sad like the sob of a new-born grief
Lulled in the bosom of delight;
Voice of the starry wilderness,
  Lost in the ancient aisles of light —
  Lingering there in a museful flight —
Speak to me now with your old caress.

Voice of the night and voice of my own,
  Kiss from my soul its wan distress;
  Lull my heart to joy's excess
With the charm of a lover's monotone!
Is it a dream, this voice serene,
  Whispering down from the starry zone,
  Crooning of love for me alone —
Love of my love for my heart's dead queen?

Speak to me, voice of the years untold,
  Echo the thoughts of your olden trust,
  Of men and women turned to dust
And nations lost in burial mold.

Speak to me out of the dreamful past,
When life was a song from a hoop of gold,
And say, O night! shall mine eyes behold
The face of my love again — at last?

True Love's Reward

Love, walking in the garden of the king,
Beheld a queenly lily blossoming,
Then fondly stooped to pluck it for his breast;
But said the Voice: "Is this thy cherishing?"

"Behold!" the Voice spake on; "Love's truest test
Would leave the blossom where it thrives the best."
So Love bent down and kissed the chaste, white thing,
And lo! the king made him an honored guest.

The Day's End

Boys, I 've been out in the clearin'
  Choppin' up some second-growth,
And, I swan, it 's mighty cheerin'
When the frost is interferin'
With yer seein' and yer hearin'
  And yer natchral feelin's, both,
To hear yer sister's voice a-callin':
"Supper, pa; the boys is all in!"

Then I drop my ax and listen,
  Makin' out I didn't hear,
For I knew a voice like this 'n,
Which fer years I 've been a-missin',
And I seem to catch the glisten
  Of two girlish eyes — it 's queer,
But yer ma lives in yer sister
As she was when first I kissed her.

You remember her as turnin'
  Thirty odd, and all wore out;
But them days when we was burnin'
Walnut firewood and earnin'

This old farm jest sets me yearnin'
  That the years could turn about
And yer ma would call me to her
From the days when first I knew her.

Seems to me I didn't treat her
  With the care I should have took;
Such a faithful wife, and neater
Than a hummin' bird, and sweeter —
God forgive me! if I meet her
  There, she 'll wear a lovin' look
And forgive me — she 'll be callin':
" Come in, pa, the night is fallin'!"

Faith

In thought's black caves the wanderer cries:
"Bring forth a light to feed mine eyes,
  That on the husks of darkness starve!
The light! the light! O God, the Wise!"

And then the Voice speaks, calm and low:
" My son, thine eyes would perish so;
  The light is fierce and blinds the weak.
Grope with thy hands and thou shalt know!"

Over the Way

Over the way of your dreams, my boy,
  Are wondrous things for your eyes to see,
And wonderful paths to a world of joy,
  And the marvelous land of the Ought-to-Be.

There is gold in the dust that your feet will
      tread,
  And diamonds gleam on the wayside grass,
And wreaths of laurel to grace your head
  Hang waiting to crown you as you pass.

There are marble castles and broad estates,
  And servants to every wish fulfill,
And armored hosts at the castle gates
  Stand ready and eager to do your will.

There are living springs to renew your youth,
  And dreamful shades for your least repose,
And breezes to fan you with love and truth,
  And gardens that blossom like the rose.

At the Sign of the Ginger Jar

There are wildwoods ringing with songs of birds;
  There are sumptuous feasts where friends are met
To greet you with tender and honest words,
  And never a theme that you might regret.

Ah! over the way of your dreams it lies —
  This land of the Ought-to-Be, so fair;
This paradise of the cloudless skies,
  Where the Best and Right are everywhere.

Your childhood lives in this happy land,
  And the loved ones lost in the years ago
In the glow of the glorious sunlight stand
  And tenderly beckon you there, I know.

What care if your present path is bleak
  And the shadows clutch at your garments' hem?
It 's over the way that your soul must seek
  For the light that will ever banish them.

Just over the way of your dreams, my boy,
  Are wondrous things for your eyes to see,
And wonderful paths to a world of joy
  And the marvelous land of the Ought-to-Be.

The Last Hope

Lord, in the gloom of my distress,
When every earthly hope is fled,
When joy within my heart lies dead,
Nor Love may give me one caress—
Then, Father, from the caves of Grief
My chastened spirit seeks release;
My soul pines for celestial peace
Within Thy Temple of Belief!

Oh, fail me not, thou Christian God,
As human promises have failed!
I have not fled when sore assailed,
I have not flinched beneath the Rod;
For, in each scathing stroke of Fate,
Has come to me Thy sacred Hope,
A faith that bids me, though I grope
In darkness still, to trust—and wait.

And this last hope I keep, and dare
The torments of life's heartless feud;
The tortures of the devil's brood,
The stinging serpents of despair;

Jehovah Thou must be! — to steal
The soul of man to bear his cross.
Else Earth and Time were less than dross,
And "death" were Life's supreme appeal.

Jure Divino

Love is a draught from the lily's cup
With summer's sweetness brimming up;
Love is the tremulous, happy note
That wells from the thrush's swelling throat;
Love is the dawn, with its heart of fire
High flaming with a great desire;
Love is the sigh of the sea, the call
To the clouds from the wandering waterfall —
And oh, in the dawn, in the summer and sea
Sings ever the love of my Love to me!

VERSES PLAYFUL AND HUMOROUS

Josephine

Hark, the very birds are singing,
"Josephine!"
And within my heart is ringing
"Josephine!"
Till my senses, all a-chime,
Keep repeating, time and time,
"Have you seen Josephine,
Sweet, sweet, pretty, sweet Josephine?"

O, she wears a crown of gold,
Josephine,
Though she isn't very old,
Josephine;
But she's growing, day by day,
And we know that, anyway,
She's a Queen Josephine —
Sweet, sweet, pretty, sweet Josephine.

In your kingdom there are many,
Josephine,
And I am as poor as any,
Josephine;
But the bounty of your smile
Would increase my wealth a pile —
Won't you smile on me a while,
Josephine —
Sweet, sweet, petite
Josephine ?

Dolly in the Rain

When Dolly tiptoed in the rain
The shameless sun peeped out to see —
Well, certain charming things were plain
When Dolly tiptoed in the rain!
I peeped out, too; but with disdain
The saucy maiden glanced at me.
When Dolly tiptoed in the rain
The shameless sun peeped out to see.

My Lady of Easter

The lilies that lean by the altar
  Are pale as My Lady appears,
And the notes of the choristers falter
  And fall on unlistening ears,
For her face is more luring and fairer
  Than the loveliest lily unfolded,
And her grace is more rhythmical, rarer,
  Than by music e'er molded.

In the pride of her piety, stately,
  Unbending, she moves in the aisle,
With eyes looking downward sedately,
  With lips uncaressed by a smile.
She's a saint, from the sole of her sandal
  To the crown of her burnished bronze hair—
With my heart on her shrine for a candle
  I'd worship her there.

Well I know why all nature aspires
  And spring's jewels we crush at our feet,
Why the sun spills the gold of its fires
  And it lies unobserved in the street—

'T is because from her saintly seclusion
My Lady emerges, reborn,
To dazzle, and dare our intrusion,
And lure us with scorn.

She comes with her heritage olden;
Like a sorceress swaddled in smiles
She will charm us again, unbeholden
To aught but her womanly wiles.
She bewilders and blinds, and her voice is
Like a heavenly promise enthralling.
We adore her and — well, she rejoices
That love is our calling!

Triolet

The days pass by and still I wait,
With all my love for you unspoken.
I dally with relentless fate;
The days pass by and still I wait
In hope that from your high estate
You 'll give me some assuring token.
The days pass by and still I wait,
With all my love for you unspoken.

An "Old Maid"

There's a spinster of thirty-some years whose abode
Is at number some hundreds in Sheridan road,
And the peach-and-cream lassies who live thereabout
Trip by in gay dresses with many a flout,
And giggle and whisper they're "really afraid"
This time-tempered lady will die an "old maid"!
Great heavens! just think what a terrible fate—
To live and to die a forlorn celibate!

Now, the worst of all this is the evident truth
That this "lone" maiden lady keeps much of her
youth,
Seems ever contented and never to fret,
And laughs and is gay as if free from regret!
There are men at her elbow and men at her feet,
And men in fine turn-outs wait out in the street;
But, alas! this poor lady will certainly grow
Much older, and she is unmarried, you know!

Too bad! 'T is a pity! She's such a nice girl—
Or spinster—a man must, indeed, be a churl
Who would fail to discover her beauty and charm!

Still, the oddest of all is she shows no alarm
For this horrible fate that impends — can it be
That she 'd rather not marry? She said so to me —
This is quite confidential: I asked for her hand
And she didn't seem just to — well, you understand!

The Best Name

When writing verses, dear, to you,
As swains enamored often do,
  No matter then what name I use
To keep you in a fair disguise
From idly prying public eyes,
  There is one privilege I choose:
Whatever name, or famed or fine,
You bear, I still must call you Mine.

With Daisy in the Rain

There are many occupations
  Which may fascinate and charm
By their pleasing operations
  And their teasing spice of harm;
There is sitting in a street car
  With a lady in the aisle,
When you hide behind your paper
  With a guileful, guilty smile.
But this truth is very plain
To my mildly maddened brain,
  There is nothing to compare,
  Any time or anywhere,
To walking home with Daisy in the rain.

When the scintillating shower
  Drizzles in the dingy street,
There 's a certain subtle power
  In pedestrians you meet.
There 's a tantalizing promise
  In each lowly lifted dress
That is apt to keep you dodging
  Like a shadow, I confess.

But how easy to restrain
All the ardor that you feign
  For the stranger, when you find
  That your journey is confined
To walking home with Daisy in the rain.

While from street to street you wander,
  With her little dimpled hand
Resting on your arm, you ponder
  If she 'll ever understand
Why you like a small umbrella
  Hardly large enough for two,
And you make the journey longer
  Than you really ought to do.
And you hardly can refrain
From attempting to explain
  What the trouble is about;
  But you always, always doubt
When walking home with Daisy in the rain.

Sour Grapes

I never cared the least for Lou,
Of course; and yet I listened to
Her girlish chatter
With pleasure that suggested quite
A charming quest for one who might
Take up the matter.

I will admit I saw the child
And kissed her hand — whereat she smiled —
Well, almost daily;
But Lou was passing sweet and young,
And then, you know, she laughed and sung,
Ah me! so gayly!

I kissed her hand, and more, perhaps;
But just to pique the younger chaps
Who were so plenty.
Well — I am one-and-forty now,
While Lou — dear me, I must allow
She's won, and twenty!

That gawky son of Banker Rich
Has gained the dimpled prize for which
    The town was sighing.
And I — I have the cards she sent.
A woman's modes of punishment
    Are very trying.

Rondel

You pass beneath my window, dear,
  Garbed in your suit of modest brown;
  You don't look up, but I look down,
Half in delight and half in fear.

Fear that you might behold me here
  And greet my glances with a frown —
You pass beneath my window, dear,
  Garbed in your suit of modest brown.

Alas, 't is truly most severe
  That you, of all the girls in town,
  Should be to me a Proper Noun —
No more! though daily through the year
You pass beneath my window, dear.

His Modest Wish

I know, alas, fair dame, that you
  May well deride this slender ditty,
And laugh to scorn the rhymester who
  Now scorns to laugh, more is the pity!
But Cupid treats me with disdain
  When in your neat suburban cottage;
And so his favor I would gain
  By means of this small bit of pottage.

I met you first at Madame Fine's
  And watched your dancing through the german.
Your feet were lighter than her wines;
  You juggled with my heart like—Herrmann!
You wore a flower coronet
  Whose blooms were dimmed by those below it;
The blossoms crowned you queen, and yet
  You needed no such mark to show it.

Your white arms were twin scepters such
  As no queen ever had save Venus;
And could I once but feel their touch
  No monarch would dare come between us!

And this, dear queen, is what I ask —
Nor could a vassal wish be fairer —
On bended knee I pray the task:
Oh, let me be your scepter-bearer!

Josephine's Hat

What a gay array of hats!
Some are mysteries, but that's
Josephine's!
I'm certain, by the crown —
Not a smarter one in town —
It's a queen's!

Yet it only gives a trace
Of the grace and charm of face
Which it shades,
For our Josephine is sweet
As the rarest bloom you 'll meet,
Ere it fades.

Underneath the hat she knows
She 's as winsome as a rose
In a bower
Where the sun and shade coquet —
Oh! how I would love to get
Such a flower!

Triolets Under the Trees

Out under the trees
  There are wonderful fancies.
When one is at ease,
Out under the trees,
All the world seems to please
  Like your sweet, roguish glances.
Out under the trees
  There are wonderful fancies.

In some of them, dear,
  I dream that you love me;
But I tremble and fear
In some of them, dear,
That you 're fickle, and veer
  Like the gay leaves above me.
In some of them, dear,
  I dream that you love me.

In the tree is a nest,
  Where a mother-bird hovers,
With a song in her breast.
In the tree is a nest;

And is this not the best
  For birds, dear, or lovers?
In the tree is a nest
  Where a mother-bird hovers.

My roof-tree, my sweet,
  Has a nest I have made you.
To this sheltered retreat —
My roof-tree, my sweet —
Will you come — from the heat
  Of the world it will shade you?
My roof-tree, my sweet,
  Has a nest I have made you.

From my heart a love song
  Shall I sing for your pleasure;
Yes, all our life long,
From my heart a love song
Shall gush pure and strong
  In victorious measure.
From my heart a love song
  Shall I sing for your pleasure.

My Lady of Dawn

She pattered down the garden walk
  And hummed an ancient ballad;
She paused, and sighed, and plucked a stalk
  Of lettuce for the salad!

My Lady rises with the day,
  The Morning runs to greet her;
But vexed Diana flies away —
  The Maid is so much sweeter!
Down flowered paths My Lady trips
  On trimmest feet and slender,
Her gown held up by finger tips
  Like roses, pink and tender.

She lifts her skirts so prettily
  And shows such ankles, truly,
I long to comment wittily
  And praise perhaps unduly.
With laughter in her wooing voice
  She sings, and all around her
The song birds of the Dawn rejoice
  Because, at last, they've found her.

Where'er she treads the grasses bow
  Devotedly before her
With gifts of jeweled dew — I trow
  She has one more adorer!
The blossoms are old-fashioned — yes,
  And she the rarest of them.
She plucks them, and — I must confess —
  Because they 're hers I love them.

Catalogued

"What is love like?" you ask. I guess
Love wears a chic, beribboned dress
Of softest, lightest, sunny blue —
The very kind that best suits you.
Love has a bonny smile, a face
That mirrors every maiden grace,
Gray eyes that read my dearest thought,
Hair from the golden sunshine caught,
And charms too numerous to tell,
Save that they make us love her well.
In fact, you know — of course you do —
That love is you!

The Price of Absence

He writes: "In spite of summer's green,
The town has lost its charm, Nadine,
Since you migrated;
The drive is wan, the flower beds
Seem lonely, and their drooping heads
Emaciated.
Their dewy blooms were fair to see
When last you smiled on them — and me!

"I'll swear the sky was bluer then,
But now — I don't see it till ten —
My 'blues' outdo it.
I think you might come back at least
A week to cheer a lonely beast —
You'd never rue it!
That Norton girl, the chic brunette
With saucy eyes, is with us yet.

"Of course I see her more or less;
The town is talking some, I guess —

These gossips bore one!
She 's good enough when you 're away,
But you know well that, come who may,
I still adore *one!*
I have n't seen Miss N—— to-night,
And have, at last, a chance to write."

MORAL

Poor man must be amused
One way or t'other,
And *sans* one maid is used
To court another !

A Valentine

Here 's a heart for you, lady, which Cupid
  Has used for a target; the dart
That remains is the last one the stupid
  Winged at it — impaled it — poor heart!
The arrow is topped with a feather
  You wore in that ravishing hat
When first we went walking together;
  Now, truly, what think you of that?

The rest of the missile discloses
  A shaft of your wit, with a tip
As fine as the tint of your roses
  And bright as the red of your lip.
Is Cupid your archer, then, tell me?
  If he aims by the light of your eyes
He needs must shoot true and compel me
  To fall at your feet as a prize.

As a valentine, lady, I send you
  The dart, and the heart that it struck;
In return I implore and intend you
  To give me your own for — good luck!

And then, I 'm so grasping and greedy,
Another arrangement I 've planned;
That, in manner befitting and speedy,
You 'll give me your wee little hand.

Art Institute Memories

It seems so long since she and I,
Among the throng of passers-by,
Stood reading in each other's eyes
The secret of love's mysteries.

The summer sunlight kissed her lips
And filtered through her finger tips
As, one by one, they brushed away
The curls upon her brow that day.

Her fair hair mocked the summer shine,
Her cheeks were red as scarlet wine,
Her eyes were blue as skies of spring,
When all the wilds are blossoming.

And yet, withal, she was so fair,
I loved and left her hanging there;
Because, alas! this charming dame
Was but a picture in a frame.

From Season to Season

But yesterday
I walked with Fay
Among the lilac hedges;
We strayed about
A mile, no doubt,
A-plucking blooms, and — pledges.

The day was fair,
The lilacs there
Seemed nodding gayly to us;
The mating birds
Piped loving words
To us as if they knew us.

I held her hand —
You understand
I did it for protection;
We, at each pause,
Discussed the laws
Of "natural selection."

Heigho! the year
Is not yet sere,
And spring but lately tarried;
I haunt the hedge,
But glean no pledge,
For Fay has gone and married!

The Circus

In my purse there was gold,
But Grace went to the circus.
Till the tickets were sold
In my purse there was gold.
Ah, 't is sad to behold
How our dear sisters work us!
In my purse there was gold,
But Grace went to the circus.

Procrastination

My Lady wears a big bouquet
  She calls a bonnet,
And, oh! you ought to see the way
  She dotes upon it.
She fluffs it out with gauze cerise
And pats each puff and dainty crease
Until I fear she 'll never cease
  Her unctuous toying.
But if I venture to complain
She does the whole thing once again,
And pouts, and murmurs with disdain:
  "You 're so annoying!"

My Lady's milliner is high
  In price and standing,
And scorns my protests when I try,
  In tones commanding,
To make her cut her bill in two;
She laughs and answers: "Après vous!
Monsieur! she vears zose charms for you —
  Monsieur 's so tasteful!"

"Vain man!" think I, but pay the bill
And let My Lady have her will,
Content to hold my tongue until —
She grows more wasteful.

Fact versus Fancy

When last I strolled these ways with Grace
We chatted of a country place
And light expenses;
A cottage framed in flower beds,
Yard trees of fir — with close-cropped heads —
And rustic fences.

Then Love was ever to be king
And all the days with songs should ring,
And we would sing them;
Or I might play the rustic squire
And read the classics by the fire —
If luck would bring them.

A market gardener keeps the cot,
And beets adorn the garden spot —
So much for fancies!
Grace wedded, some two years ago,
A millionaire — she chanced to know
His circumstances!

A Bachelor's Valentine

If I were younger, Mary Jane
  Would not so gayly flout me.
Or if she did I 'd make it plain
  She could not do without me.
She will not be my valentine.
  Forsooth, the maids are plenty—
I 'll venture that she would be mine
  If I were one-and-twenty!

Why, forty years ago there were
  A score I could have married,
And every one outfavored her;
  But then, of course, I tarried
Till Ann and Lou and Susie, too,
  And all the rest, I mind me,
Dropped me because, they said, they knew
  They knew not where to find me.

But as it is the Widow Black,
  Thank heaven, has some reason,
And knows that men, like fruit, don't lack
  In worth if out of season.

To her I 'll send a billet-doux
And state my fortune clearly —
Some thousands, I 'll admit to you —
And she will love me dearly!

The Maid Suburban

I must confess that I 'm afraid
To meet the stunning urban maid
In all her frills and finery;
I fear I 'd love her at first sight,
But, in despair, would take to flight
And go to a repinery.

But in the suburbs there are those
Who wear the quaintest quiet clothes,
And manners quite to match them.
These maids smile sweetly and we love —
We love to muse and ponder of
Some happy way to catch them.

The town girl has a regal way,
And, during her triumphant day,
Will hardly bear a curb on.
She 's urban and she makes things hum,
But for to-day and time to come
Give me the sweet suburban!

In the Storm

My child, your hero may not be,
In truth, a hero all the time;
Remember, it must chance that he
Shall still have rugged steeps to climb.
Don't place him on too high a plane
In fancy; then he will not fall
In your esteem and may attain
To something noble after all.

My boy, don't think your sweetheart bears
A halo on her golden hair;
A crown of purity she wears,
And you must help to keep it there.
But she will have her trying moods,
And be not always kind and sweet;
These are life's nerving interludes —
Sad pitfalls for unwary feet.

You both are far from perfect yet,
And quarrels will, unhaply, come —
Both may be wrong; so don't forget,
In anger's blind delirium,

That sweet concessions each must make
And tender promises renew;
Or else a loving heart may break
And sorrow come to dwell with you.

We Met by Chance

We met by chance! Yes, I recall
I found her waiting in the hall
Of Mme. Dainty's charming flat.
She wore a jaunty Dresden hat
Above a face that might enthral
An anchorite. A gauzy shawl
Of white half hid her charms; and all
The vision told me that
We met by chance!

As in an angle of the wall
She stood — dressed for a fancy ball,
Perhaps — a blushing shepherdess,
With ribboned crook, I could but look
A love that I dared not express.
Yet, in her eyes, as from a book,
I read consent; then walked away,
Because this maid I met to-day
Was porcelain, exquisite, small —
We met by chance!

Rainy-Day Notes

The rasping rain runs down the pane;
  The whole highway is flooded;
The elms sob low, and weep, although
  Their leaves with gems are studded.
The postman plods with dripping odds
  And ends of mail — I 'll warrant
Some tender note from parts remote
  Is deluged by the torrent.

Some dainty maid, no doubt, essayed
  With utmost care and neatness
The note to pen, and mailed it, then,
  In all its pristine sweetness;
And fondly she imagines He
  Will get it in its glory —
The fates veto the plan, and so
  'T is just the same old story!

Alas! the years must have their tears —
  Those heart rains so distressing;
The storms that mar life's joys and are
  Bound aye to keep us guessing.

The message yet, though soiled and wet,
A joyful heart may capture;
And may not we through sorrow see,
Anon, some hint of rapture?

Flattery

You tease for a rhyme
That will "tickle and flatter";
Must I write every time
You tease for a rhyme,
Little woman? Well, I'm
Quite enthralled by your chatter—
You tease for a rhyme
That will "tickle and flatter."

Triolets of Discretion

She drew her little hand away
And, pouting, warned me "not to tease."
Was it in truth, or just in play,
She drew her little hand away,
That rare and radiant summer day,
When we sat side by side at ease?
She drew her little hand away
And, pouting, warned me not to tease.

He drew his little hand away
And scanned it with inquiring eyes;
Remarking, "It takes five to stay."
He drew his little hand away,
And left me guessing how to play,
The while I stared in awed surprise.
He drew his little hand away
And scanned it with inquiring eyes.

"Two bluffs were those," perhaps you 'll say.
I thought so, too, but did n't "call";
I did n't clearly see my way.
"Two bluffs were those," perhaps you 'll say;

But if they were n't !— I must betray
A shrinking from the "marble fall."
"Two bluffs were those," perhaps you 'll say;
I thought so, too, but did n't "call."

When Pay Day Comes

When pay day comes what transports thrill
The o'ercharged soul and seem to fill
The whole wide world with blissfulness!
Each stranger face smiles a caress;
The rustle of the crisp bank bill
Sounds sweeter than the blithesome trill
Of spring's first songster, and a still,
Deep sense of riches we confess
When pay day comes.

Whereas despair was rife, the skill
Of hidden forces works until
Our cherished griefs grow strangely less —
Are lost in raptures that possess
The citadels of mind and will
When pay day comes!

The Ring and the Heart

This ring I give to you, my dear,
Is passing quaint and old and queer;
Two golden serpents help enthrone
Its deep, seductive heart of stone.
Pray, if the golden snakes were gone
Might not the jewel heart throb on
With sympathetic beat and thrill—
Be not, as now, cold, hard and still?

Sometimes about the human heart
The serpents play their selfish part,
And in the pulseless grip of gold
The heart, poor thing, grows hard and cold—
A jewel counterfeiting fire
And flashing with entranced desire,
That nevermore shall find a voice
To make some kindred heart rejoice.

Then let this talisman, this ring,
Save you from such a deadly thing;
Beware of golden snakes, and strive
To keep your tender heart alive;

And if you fear this may not be
Without assistance, come to me,
And in my love will I enshrine
That deep, seductive heart of thine.

A Place of Refuge

In this my den the haunting muse
Sometimes my wayward thought pursues
  And leads it to a sylvan nook
  To rest beside a purling brook —
The very spot that one would choose.
Then what delight it brings to lose
All consciousness of sounds that bruise
  The mind; of paper, pen and book
    In this my den.

Outside, the city's thunders fuse
In one dull roar, and passing shoes
  Squeak by my door; and if I look
  One moment from my dream the crook
Of fate recalls me to — "the blues"
    In this my den.

Years After

The years upon you lightly lie,
  Your verve has carried all before it;
And yet I must admit that I,
  Though thrice enchanted, half deplore it.
I've watched new gallants win your smiles
  And wished I might have done as they did,
But knew, alas! that all my wiles
  Were, like my coat, antique and faded.

I see your golden hair has lost
  None of its sunny grace and luster;
My locks have felt an early frost
  And but a sorry few I muster.
Your eyes still challenge — do they not?
  Those keen gray eyes which could be tender.
Ah me! you've hardly changed a jot;
  Still, were you not a bit more slender?

'T is thus that fickle Time presumes
  To tease us in this life of ours;
You still preserve your youthful blooms,
  And I preserve — some faded flowers!

Oh, just a bit of summer-time,
'T was many years ago you gave them;
They serve to point a piece of rhyme,
And that, of course, is why I save them!

Without Avail

Without a veil I saw her stand
Upon the calm lake's pebbled strand;
The day was hot, the sun was bright
And kissed with evident delight
Her rosy cheeks — already tanned —
With freedom I would fain command;
She seemed a nymph of summer-land —
A sylvan goddess robed in white
Without a vale.

She little knew the "coup" I'd planned!
She smiled, her flossy tresses fanned
By fragrant winds in playful flight;
But when I spoke, with gay despite
She told me I had sought her hand
Without avail.

Piqued

For beauty's sake she lives,
And, beauty's self, she gives
  A finer seeming
To all the cloudless day;
And as she trips my way
  I fall to dreaming
That Goddess Flora's come
Straight from elysium.

She moves with rhythmic grace,
And watchful eyes might trace
  A flash of stocking.
The poetry of pose
Is hers — the stocking shows
  A bit of clocking!
Those clocks are only fast
In that she hurries past.

The curls that veil her face
Seem music held in space

By golden tether,
And as she flouts her head —
Curls, lips and airy tread
All sing together,
In laughter's lightest vein,
A chorus of disdain!

Thus youth must have its fling
And spring must laugh and sing,
Scornful and joyous.
We ancients are more wise,
But, though we moralize,
The laughs annoy us.
I 'd have that youngster know
She 's not the entire show!

Would Be More Than Kin

My Lady is most fair and kind
When on the meads we stroll together,
And breezy as the balmy wind
And smiling as the sunny weather.
The sun entangles in her hair,
Her eyes reflect the skies above her,
And tulips blush and blossom where
There are two lips for some true lover.

My Lady wears a muslin gown
That flutters in a way engaging,
And when she romps across the down
She knows she sets my pulses raging;
For her light feet are swift, indeed—
In fact, I know no maid to match her—
And, though I race with all my speed,
I find, alas! I cannot catch her.

My Lady's white, bejeweled hands
Are fragile as they are entrancing,
And still the reins she understands,
And holds while steeds—and men—are
dancing.

Dear lady mine, will you be kind,
  And give the ribbons to another —
And me your hand—for, oh, I find
  I cannot bear to be your brother!

May and June

May trips in the dance,
  But June follows after.
With a hint of romance
May trips in the dance;
But June comes with a glance
  Of love-making and laughter.
May trips in the dance,
  But June follows after!

Chloe's Valentine

With growing sense of diffidence
She pauses at the corner,
Quite unaware her bashful air
Doth passing well adorn her —
A child of Eve, bound to achieve
Her wish and post her letter,
Though fearing lest some one has guessed
The tremors that beset her.

A valentine! — the lace design
Upon the packet shows it.
The address down for fear the town
Will know it as she knows it.
Well, little maid, a careless Blade
May hold it in derision,
Nor even guess the tenderness
That prompted your decision!

The paper lace may find a place
Among his pipes and papers,
Considered quite unique and bright —
When folded into tapers!

Ah, well-a-day! the maids must play
At love and pay the piper,
But youth shall prance a lively dance
When Chloe's years are riper!

Rondel—The Wood-Thrush

In the twilight of the trees
Hear the wood-thrush singing
Low, sweet summer harmonies,
In the twilight.

Warbles he with wondrous ease,
On a lithe branch swinging
In the twilight of the trees.

Bell-like tones the laden breeze
From his throat is bringing—
Lo, sweet summer harmonies
In the twilight!

Miss Diplomacy

She read the long amusement list,
Then sate her down to writing;
This is the letter she dismissed —
So tender and inviting:

I 'm writing to you, dear, to-day
Because I have so much to say
That won't keep till to-morrow.
But first, I want to whisper this —
I send you back that foolish kiss
You gave, or did I borrow?

You naughty boy! I 'm quite ashamed
To even have the subject named,
Excepting in a letter.
You must come up to-morrow night;
I think that then, perhaps, I might
Explain the matter better.

Dear boy, you know I miss you so,
Because — you surely ought to know
The reason why; now, don't you?

And when you come, bring up some creams —
When were the last? How long it seems!
You 'll bring them surely, won't you?

You ought to see my "latest" gown;
And, by the way, that play 's in town!
The horrid one; I 'm dying
To see the thing — it 's quite the rage.
I know you just abhor the stage;
But, you 're so self-denying!

Now, don't forget, you dear old thing,
To bring the tickets — and, oh, bring
That latest photograph of you —
It looks so handsome and so fine!
Perhaps I 'll give you one of mine;
Would one of those "back numbers" do?

A Valentine

Time was, sweet dame (when broidered coats were
smart,
And doublets, puffed with finest textured lace,
On manly fronts found proper resting-place),
That valentines played friendship's kindly part
In all sincerity, and when the heart
Of earnest love might feel it no disgrace
In verses neat its fondest hopes to trace,
Or spell its servitude with modest art.
Then gallantry was deemed no foppish thing
Fit only for the perfumed parlor knight;
But men who fought to keep their honor bright
Were proud to serve My Lady and to bring
The homage of fair words and gentleness
To charm her moods with friendship's fine caress.

Thus would I, though I fear my words be trite,
The old example emulate to-day,
And in this humble, halting sonnet pray
That I may find some favor in your sight.
My love shall minister to your delight,

L. of C.

Or serve you in misfortune's sad delay,
And guard you from all evil, come what may,
And be to you all that is requisite.
My strength you shall command in every sense,
Nor will I ask a haughty bondsman's fee;
I 'll ask that you be this — true heart to me,
With, now and then, a smile for recompense.
Ah, may I in your answer, sweet, divine
That you will be, indeed, my valentine?

Absence

The mock-bird sings in the dusky morn
With a cadence sad and a song forlorn;
Yet his soul is glad, for he know that love
Broods fondly in a nest above.

So I, though lone because removed
So far to-night from my own beloved,
Thrill with delight, for I think of you,
And know love broods in your home-nest too.

The Wedding Time

The celibate must croak, forsooth!
'T is much he knows of love and youth,
To speak in such a fashion;
Because his cracked old cynic heart
Has played, no doubt, a selfish part
He sneers at love's glad passion.

This is the merry marriage time —
Sing, ho, the wedding ditty!
And yet it but reminds me I 'm
Unwed — is 't more the pity?
I used to be a gay gallant,
With sweethearts fair and many;
But now, if I would wed I can't,
For loves I have n't any.

This is the mating month of June —
Sing, hi, the bridal carol!
For down the aisle the bride will soon
Appear in white apparel;
The spirit of the sweet wild rose
Will keep her cheeks in flower;
Her pulse will romp for joy — it knows
The Business of the Hour.

At the Sign of the Ginger Jar

Sing, ho, sing, hi, the time is come
  When wedding-bells will jingle!
A host will laugh and dance, and some
  Their smiles and tears will mingle.
Fair maid, brave youth, 't is summer now,
  But as you stand together,
Hands clasped, pray that your marriage vow
  May last through wintry weather.

A Christmas Wish

O, Santa Claus! I ask no toys
Such as suffice for grown-up boys;
No rings or smoking-jackets fine;
No presents of cigars or wine;
No pillows of unique design.
I do not ask for bonds or stocks;
For chased and gilded mantel-clocks,
Nor even fine embroidered socks.
I only ask that you will send
The gracious presence of a friend.

My Valentine

But once a year the Fates, my dear,
Permit me thus to write to you —
Alas! they don't insure this won't
Seem ludicrous or trite to you.
For weeks I've penned stray lines to blend
In singing verse to woo your heart;
But words are weak, nor half bespeak
My love. Ah, if I knew your heart!

These winter days, when you upraise
Your eyes, and, smiling, glance my way,
Fair summer smiles with all her wiles,
And joys, light-footed, dance my way.
But if you frown — ah! then the town
Becomes a frigid waste to me,
And black despair broods everywhere,
And sorrows crowd in haste to me.

All this and more. Since I adore
So fondly, may I court you, dear?
I'll buy you things, bonbons and rings,
And later I'll support you, dear.

Come to me, sweet, slow-paced or fleet,
  Choose any of the ways to come;
Be, maid of mine, my valentine
  To-day and all the days to come!

At Graduation

While looking down the green highway
I saw a damsel pass to-day.
  She wore a lawny gown of red,
  A crown of poppies on her head,
And flossy locks of gold astray.
Quoth I: "Young maiden, whither, pray?"
She lifted smiling lips to say:
  "'T is graduation day!" and fled,
    While looking down.

Alas! though graduate she may,
I saw her roguish eyes betray
  Gay proof of study still ahead —
  For maids must learn to woo and wed,
And vanquish in the social fray —
    While looking down!

On the Street

My Lady, muffled deep in furs,
  Rides gayly by me, quite unknowing
That cheeks with blooms as bright as hers
  Are fairer than the fairest showing
Of scarlet blossoms in bouquets
Of garden plots in summer days;
That in this clear and frosty weather
Her smiles call June's best tints together.

My Lady, in her brown and ermine,
  And bear-skin robe, tucked well around her,
Seems sweeter than I dare determine
  By an analysis profounder
Than gazing in her brilliant eyes
For briefest space, like one who tries
In instant glancing at the sun
To learn its secrets, one by one.

My Lady goes with bells a-jangle,
  A "tiger" and a coachman stately.
The runners rasp; her tresses tangle —
  A boa clings to her sedately.

Oh, I know one who fain would run
Beside her sleigh till day is done!
He walks instead — a mere beholder —
And feels the day is growing colder.

Across the Way

Across the way dim shadows play,
Where fragrant blossoms blush and sway
With every touch of wanton wind,
And blond bees clutch in ardor blind
The tender blooms, or, droning, stray
Where dandelion blots inlay
With gold the green lawn's gay display
Of rippling grasses intertwined
Across the way.

But, best of all, My Lady May
Sits basking in the sun; and pray,
In all the dooryard can you find
A bud to beauty more inclined
Than May — just two years old to-day —
Across the way?

The Promenade

My Lady promenades the drive
And smiles upon me, quite contented
In knowledge that, howe'er I strive,
I am about her half demented.
One small gloved hand rests on my arm
With lightest touch, almost caressing,
That fills me with a vague alarm
That it may feel my heart confessing.

My Lady wears a silken dress
That rustles in the breeze contrary;
She fights the wind in gay distress,
And blushes like a rosy fairy.
O saucy wind, be not unkind!
Your gentler mood is more assuring;
And yet, to my enraptured mind,
You make My Lady most alluring!

But yesterday I strolled alone
Upon the drive, and thought it gloomy;
I noticed that the birds had flown
And longed for summer, green and bloomy.

At the Sign of the Ginger Jar

To-day the singing birds are here,
And carol in My Lady's laughter;
O, will you be my June, my dear,
And all the golden days thereafter?

If I Propose

If I propose a walk, a ride,
A round of golf, or aught beside,
You 're almost certain to decline
To make your plans accord with mine —
Yet if I go away you chide.
How many, many times I 've tried
For your amusement to provide,
But dance nor play — nothing is fine
If I propose.

Henceforth I 'll not attempt to guide
My Lady fair, but shall abide
In peace unique and masculine —
Confound it! I shall not repine,
But don't refuse to be my bride
If I propose.

Lyrielle

Whom do I love? And must I tell,
Sweetheart, the whole list through?
I love — now let me think a spell —
I love — well, I love you!

Nay, don't protest and hide your face —
Dear me! and blushes, too!
And is it, then, a sad disgrace,
My own, that I love you?

One day you came a-visiting
My heart — no doubt you knew
You entered without knock or ring —
And stayed; so I love you.

You 're not so very large, and still
I fear me it is true
That in my heart no other will
Find place while I love you.

So here 's a kiss — a new-signed lease;
Thus love shall aye renew
Your freehold in my heart, and peace
Shall reign, for I love you!

Her Letter

I have your letter over-sea.
With dainty superscription writ
The treasured missive came to me,
Its brightness beaming more than wit;
Its simplest phrase a witchery
Of words, wherein yourself was hid.
What wonder that I fondled it,
And held it as I've held your hand?
Dear love, I know you 'll understand,
Just as our fair First Mother did!

The contents of the tender note —
Well, really, I cannot recall
The phrases as if learned by rote;
And yet, ah yes, I know them all!
They were almost too sweet to quote;
So musical those magic words
That, as I listen now, they fall
In jeweled strands of golden song
As wooing, cooing as a throng
Of newly mated woodland birds.

It may be no endearing thought
Was pictured there in black and white;
But, as I read the lines, I sought —
Discovered, too, with keen delight —
Some little waifs of heart-love, caught
Like Cupid tangled in the net,
That maidens dangle for the sprite.
Your hand had penned the words; and so,
Of course, sweetheart, I could but know
That your caresses lingered yet.

Lays that Please

In other days the Poet's lays
Were objects of unstinted praise.
To-day, you know, the lays that please
Are those that grow in henneries.

Horace to Lydia

(Book I., Ode XIII.)

Oh, Lydia, loved one ! how jealous my heart is
When Telephus' red neck and wax arms you admire,
And I see that kid with you at late Roman parties—
Ah, then from sheer anguish I all but expire !

The wheels in my head get to whirling insanely;
The rich autumn tints of my cheek turn to scarlet;
My vigil-dimmed eyes begin leaking inanely,
And my soul is aflame—all because of that varlet !

I rage when, half tipsy, he stains your white shoulders
With bruises, and quarrels with you o'er his Massic,
Or kisses you roughly before all beholders,
And scars with his boy lips your coy lips so-classic !

I warn you he 'll scorn you without a compunction
When least you expect it—as he came between us—
For, a brute he must be that would wound with such unction
Lips filled with the lurements and nectar of Venus !

* * * * *

Ah, Lydia ! more than thrice happy the people
Who, in love's gentle bonds, have no discord or smarting;
And, in marital life and felicities, keep all
The pains of disunion for death's final parting !

A Lost Talisman

Among the palms the Thing was lost—
That gilded circlet, rich embossed,
And marked from "From Ned to Bessie."
"A ring?"—Oh, no! "A belt?"—not yet!
An ample g—oodness! In *her* set
They 're always swell and dressy.

Horace to Leuconoe

(Book I., Ode XI.)

Leuconoe, you needs must see
That he who by astrology
Divines his fate will it await
A prey to sad chronology.
Forbidden lore like that is more
Deceiving than ontology;
Is death to joy and sleep, my boy,
And nurtures rank pseudology!
Take heed that he whom the Chaldee
Enthralls by weird horology
Gives gold for sooths whose rank untruths
Demand more than apology.

Be patient, friend, until the end
That great Jove has assigned you,
And rest assured it can't be cured,
Nor needs a guide to find you.
If chance your days be brief—why, praise
The gods that trouble's spared you!

If they be long, then pipe a song
For added joys declared you!
Be wise and gay, and let each day
Be blest, nor fear to-morrow —
Strain well your wine, all cares decline
And banish time and sorrow!

The Eclipse

From gauzy mists of far, translucent white
Diana smiled upon her lord the Earth,
And all the trysting, star-embowered night
Beheld the sight with flashing eyes of mirth.
But Earth, as wooed to leave his ancient place,
With his dark presence kissed Diana's lips;
And then — oh, then! — her ardent, blushing face
Passed slowly into a complete eclipse.

Madrigal

The troubadours sing merrily
  Of maids of wealth and station
  Who have no occupation
Save breaking hearts; but, verily,
My wit must run contrarily;
  For, with unfeigned elation,
I sing a maid without renown —
Sweet Dolly in her gingham gown!

She smiles on me diurnally
  As I pass by her posies.
  Just now she prunes her roses
And talks to me fraternally,
But dazzles me supernally
  When her flared gown discloses
The fairest throat in all the town —
Sweet Dolly 's in her gingham gown!

Heigho! If I were not so old —
  Long years too old for folly —
  This dear suburban Dolly
Might find me seeming overbold;

Might not complain that I am "cold"
And growing melancholy!
Ah, well! she 'll wed some youthful clown,
Will Dolly, in her gingham gown!

At the Gate

My love to you. And can't you guess
The more than passing tenderness,
Dear maid of mine, that makes me wait
Like patient Job beside your gate
Despite your long delay, "to dress"?
Ah! If you knew my heart's excess
Of eagerness and sweet distress
There were small need to name and prate
My love to you.

You wait to dress, and I to press
My suit — amusing, I confess —
And yet I must berate the fate
That keeps me on the rack so late
At fitting phrases to express
My love to you.

Horace to Lydia

(A Paraphrase.)

Sweet Cupid was my friend,
  Long time ago;
Yet would his arrows lend
  My dearest foe.
These fragile darts you sent
  With will unsparing —
My love the punishment
  For all your daring.
At last the warfare ceased,
  And Cupid left me.
Withal my friends increased,
  He had bereft me.
I mourned him as one dead,
  Or lost forever,
And missed his cherub head,
  Darts, bow and quiver.
But oh ! last night I found him,
  To my surprise,
And saw that you had bound him
  Fast in your eyes !

Horace to Chloe

(Paraphrase in Triolets.)

Dear Chloe, this rose
I send as a token;
Yet do not suppose,
Dear Chloe, this rose
Can begin to disclose
All that I would have spoken,
Dear Chloe! This rose
I send as a token.

On its lips a caress
I have placed for your finding!
Ah, I could not do less
On its lips! A caress,
I admit with distress,
On a rose is not binding!
On its lips a caress
I have placed for your finding.

Like the rose, my poor heart
Will pine if neglected.
While it now blooms apart
Like the rose, my poor heart

Will wither and smart
If its suit be rejected !
Like the rose my poor heart
Will pine if neglected !

So, Chloe, dear child,
Give heed to my wooing,
And be reconciled
So, Chloe, dear child,
To my flower and the mild-
Mannered course I 'm pursuing !
So, Chloe, dear child,
Give heed to my wooing !

Horace to Lydia

(A Satire. Book I., Ode XXV.)

Old sweetheart mine, your charms decline
  And Roman youths now rarely woo you.
Your casement seems fit place for dreams,
  For few knock there in homage to you.

Your friendly door, that used before
  To freely swing, is now neglected,
Save, Lydia, dear, that I am here —
  Your ancient lover, long rejected!

Are you asleep — or deaf? I keep
  My lonesome vigil under protest!
Also, despite my age, to-night
  My love is proved or I know no test!

'T is well you hate the youths who prate
  Of spotless maids and guileless pleasures,
And laugh to scorn those who adorn
  Chill Hebrus' shrine with dry-leaf treasures!

I warned you they would run away
From you in search of something younger;
But here am I, old charmer — try
To satiate my great heart-hunger!

A Wail

He touched me, and a vague unrest,
A subtile tremor, thrilled my breast.
With eager eyes he scanned my face,
And then he spoke. Ah! who can tell
The mystery of words, the grace
Of speech with which he wove the spell
That made me trust him so? I know
That you will sneer, and say,
Regardless of my loss and woe,
That this thing happens every day;
But you may show more kindness when
I say, "He touched me for a Ten!"

At the Concert

The leader waved his light baton;
The frail bows of the players trembled;
A flash! a flare! the height was won
And all the hosts of song assembled!
Resistlessly the overture
Swept on and captured sense and reason;
Then Chloe smiled — success was sure
For this first concert of the season.

The chairs were filled with charming folk,
And beauty vied with wealth and talent;
The graciousness the music woke
Was showered on some near-by gallant.
The symphonies were often light,
But Chloe's heart seemed ever lighter;
Tschaikowsky's dancing themes were bright,
But Chloe's eyes were always brighter.

As on and on the music sped,
Or paused in somber note and measure,
It seemed as if all sense had fled
Save that of vague, ecstatic pleasure,

Which held the nerves in rhythmic bonds;
  But Chloe stirred her golden tresses
And then I thought of naught but blondes
  And scarlet plumes and silver dresses.

Same Old Sonnet

I would a moment of my time engage
  Shaping a sonnet to your lovely brow.
  'T is understood, I think, that I must vow
That you 're the fairest maid of any age,
And that eons of time could not assuage
  The grief with which I would behold you bow
  Your head to weep, and I would not allow
The rolling worlds that dot the gilded page
  Above to shine another fleeting hour,
Provided they—the stars—disturbed your sleep.
  And I must speak about the hair that twines
  Upon your brow like vines around a bower,
And I must tell you of my love, so deep
  That one can't fathom it with fourteen lines.

Villanelle

She stood pale and correct,
  Not the least bit excited,
As I well recollect.

She strove not for effect,
  Nor was she affrighted;
She stood pale and correct.

I had tried to detect
  Signs of love unrequited,
As I well recollect.

There were signs of neglect
  Which were very soon righted;
She stood pale and correct.

Hundreds went to inspect
  Her, and left her, delighted,
As I well recollect.

She was marble! unflecked
  From her heels to her white head;
She stood pale and correct,
As I well recollect.

A Game of Tennis

The court is rolled, the net is set,
  Two players bold are ready,
While Chloe chaffs across the net
  And laughs, "Love all, be steady!"
Love all, indeed! with Chloe near
  What need for more to think of?
I 've sipped some loving cups, but here
  There 's only one to drink of.

"My serve!" she cries; the game begins;
  I 've missed! My eyes betray me.
And yet 't is through her eyes she wins;
  I knew she would outplay me.
But "Fifteen love!" she now commands —
  What of the first injunction?
Ah, yes! no doubt she understands
  And has some slight compunction.

At last the game to "vantage" goes;
  I lay no claim to winning.
'T is she who sov'reign kindness shows
  And lets me have an inning.

By Jove! I win, by one bold stroke,
Just in the line behind her.
She sighs, "Love one"—I grasp the joke
And cry: "Come, help me find her!"

Night Thoughts

To you, O infant of my midnight thought!
I sing this tender, tense, parental song,
While to my sleep-deserted chamber throng
Old memories, nocturnal and unsought.
What wonder that my mind is overwrought?
For, oh! your ceaseless voice is overstrong,
And my cold-footed pilgrimage is long.
Come, baby—darn it! Shut up as you ought.

In fancy I recall those graceless years
Before your darling mamma made me hers,
Till in my heart the pulse of sorrow stirs,
And makes me half inclined to ape your tears.
Confound it! Sleep! Stop yelling if you can!
Ah, well, some day you 'll be a married man.

Secrets

Blonde Charlotte's face is aquiline,
And Bess has features retroussé;
One has a smile like summer-shine,
Through which wee dimples peep and play.
Her eyes are gems so rare and pure
They put to blush the Kohinoor;
Withal, she's such a winsome witch,
Is — well, no matter who or which!

When Charlotte dons her gown of gray
And Bess her jaunty suit of blue,
The two are fairer than the day
When June is ripened through and through.
And one is sweeter than the blooms
That pout without her curtained rooms;
They pout, no doubt, because their lot
Keeps them so far from — tell I 'll not!

Dear Lot and Bess are young and gay
And keep my 'wildered wits awhirl;
I know not how to break away
From one and court the other girl,

For each has charms hard to resist
And each seems fashioned to be kissed.
At least, 't were rapture to caress
That rare coquette — "Which?" You must guess!

St. Patrick's Day Warning

St. Patrick drove from Ireland
  Its hordes of snakes; but when
Pat celebrates — egad, the fates
  May bring them back again!
The snakes of old have long since died,
  No doubt; but wraiths are plenty,
And still their ghostly shades abide
  In *spiritus frumenti!*

So, heed ye, honest gentlemen —
  No word we say in censure;
But mind a still, small caution when
  You start for gay adventure.
Be glad, rejoice with heart and voice,
  And native joy will nerve you;
Be wise and kind — of sober mind —
  And may the saints preserve you.

My Lady

My Lady has returned to town
And brought a sylvan sweetness hither;
Her cheeks reflect a rustic brown
That city ways too soon will wither;
But roses glow beneath the tan—
The blooms that dazzled us last winter—
And soon the potent social ban
To proper pink and white will tint her.

My Lady has a graceful pace
That hints of walks in highways rural,
But soon Dame Fashion will displace
The stride with mincing intramural.
The freedom of the woods is gone,
And in the "season's" flare and fashion
My Lady, brilliant as the dawn,
A queen will be for gems to flash on.

Ah, me! we strolled at the "resort"
And talked in accents low and tender;
But now, of course, I must cavort,
With arm about her waist, or lend her

The friendly guidance of my hand
  Throughout the german's weary mazes,
And trust to luck she 'll understand
  The love that warms my formal phrases.

An Autumn Carol

Oh, our hearts are aglow with contentment
  That impregnates our top-lofty flat,
Where life has a joyous presentment —
  From the cook to the overfed cat;
Though lately we shuddered with terror,
  And chills at the heat's long delay,
The landlord has repented of error,
  And there 's heat in the steam-pipes to-day!

So lift up your voice and be joyous,
  For the north wind is robbed of its bite,
And the cold draughts that used to annoy us
  Are zephyrs of balmy delight.
No more will the tremors of freezing
  Our underclad weakness betray;
Away with chilled ankles and sneezing,
  For there 's heat in the steam-pipes to-day!

The Dance

Dreams of the ball!
Golden visions of splendor,
Fair as the rarest fancy inspires;
Beauty and all
Wealth and fashion can lend, or
Youth can bestow, light love's worshipful fires.

Round with the waltz,
In a glory of pleasure,
Light-hearted dancers glide gleefully by,
Till music exalts
Life's pace to the measure
And sorrow is lost in a satisfied sigh.

Music that sings
In its subtle emotion
Till the very sphere swings to its rhythmical tone,
And the spirit clings
To its wings with devotion,
Lest the song shall depart to its heaven—alone!

Alone with Jane

Jane, in a suit of Cameron plaid,
Meanders, homeward-bound, with "dad."
You know how well she looks in that
Crowned with a jaunty Scotia hat.
Ah, me! if I could join the twain,
Or skip papa, and just with Jane
Could wander home, I would be glad;
But Jane meanders home with "dad."

Jane dons a dark blue cape and gown,
And, with her mother, walks to town.
How proud and soldierly her mien
When in that martial garb she 's seen!
I would not give her mother pain,
Yet I would like to walk with Jane.
But if I did, mamma would frown;
So Jane, with mother, walks to town.

Jane, in a waist of azure hue,
Sits there and looks me through and through;
Her parents are away, I find.
Thus fortune has at last been kind;

And yet my joy is not complete,
Though Jane is smiling and petite.
My feelings I cannot explain —
I wish I were n't alone with Jane!

Simple English

Ofttimes when I put on my gloves,
I wonder if I 'm sane,
For when I put the right one on
The right seems to remain
To be put on — that is, 't is left;
Yet if the left I don
The other one is left, and then
I have the right one on.
But still I have the left on right;
The right one, though, is left
To go right on the left right hand
All right if I am deft.

Ballade of the Mediocre

Ambitious bards with song sublime
To win eternal fame essay —
To echo through the deeps of time
The voice of some grand yesterday,
Or on man's throbbing heartstrings play
Love's harmonies unspeakable.
Alas! I am not framed that way;
I beat the cymbals — that is all.

How sweet in slender snares of rhyme
To trap the tender dreams of May,
To catch the bluebell's subtle chime
Of fragrance on the hills astray;
To mock the wildwood's blithe ballet
Of blooms and flitting birds that call
The chorus to spring's roundelay!
I beat the cymbals — that is all.

To be a king of song and climb
  Olympus with a lyre — for aye
To rise above the toil and grime
  Of life, and from the stars survey
  This peevish world's discordant fray —
Ah, this were worth a master's scrawl!
  But I the Master must obey;
I beat the cymbals — that is all.

ENVOY.

Friend, in life's changeable array
  Some may be great, some must be small,
And some be grave, a few be gay —
  I beat the cymbals — that is all.

Ballade of the Comic Muse

Hail! mistress of the merry tongue,
  Of lively wit and laughing mood;
Gay queen of banter, ever young;
  Withal full of solicitude
  To ease life's worst vicissitude
By some sage jest or subtle ruse
  Of rhyme to teach us not to brood
When we may court thee, Comic Muse!

Since ancient Horace gibed and flung
  His verses at Rome's feet the crude
Conceits of time, quaint bards have sung
  To make dismay a platitude
  And give a wider latitude
To joyousness; for who would choose
  The worries of life's endless feud
When we may court the comic muse?

No, let us rather lounge among
  Byways obscure, and thus elude
The striving hordes whose gains are wrung
  From tortured lives and servitude.

If fate is harsh and times are rude,
To best resist have naught to lose;
And why should fortune needs be wooed
When we may court the comic muse?

ENVOY.

Muse, lest ambition should delude,
Be gracious, nor our suit refuse;
For mirth shall every ill exclude
When we may court thee, Comic Muse!

Ballade of Old Navies

Gone are the old-time wooden fleets,
And gone beyond our last appeal
The tars of old, whose daring feats
Were hampered by no hulls of steel.
Then war was war on timber keel,
And when a naval fight began
Ships clinched and men fought heel to heel —
No more we battle man to man.

Ah, those were days of rare conceits
Of bravery and reckless zeal,
When frigates flared their mammoth sheets
Like wings above the woe and weal
Of strife, and smoke-grimed men could feel
The jar of meeting hulls, and ran
With cutlasses defeat to deal—
No more we battle man to man.

O'er miles of sea the warship greets
Its foe to-day with shots that reel
From armoured decks, and science meets
With might, to turn grim fortune's wheel

Through distances that half reveal
Death's fierce, aerial caravan
And ruin's blackened, sprawling seal —
No more we battle man to man.

ENVOY.

O shade of Jones! could you conceal
Your grief at such a battle plan,
Wherein to science heroes kneel?
No more we battle man to man.

A Valentine Ballade

Fair, bashful maid without a beau,
  But with a tender heart and hand
On some fond gallant to bestow —
  Some lucky chap who has the "sand" —
  I think I fully understand
That trusting little heart of thine;
  So, if you 'll issue the command,
I 'll gladly be your valentine.

Or you, O regal beauty! know
  That long your conquest I have planned.
If chance my progress has been slow
  My love to fiercer flame is fanned;
  And though the quest be contraband,
Still must I strive to make you mine.
  So, servant to your least command,
I 'll gladly be your valentine.

But, most of all, to you I owe
  Allegiance, maid whose wealth of land
And gold I measured long ago;
  Your stocks and bonds are of a brand

That makes my hungry heart expand,
Until I worship at your shrine,
Wealth's humble slave — love's deodand.
I'll gladly be your valentine.

ENVOY.

O fairy of the magic wand!
The heart, the grace, the wealth combine
In one and make her love me, and
I'll gladly be your valentine.

Harvest Apples

Out in the orchard, years ago,
  There lived an ancient harvest tree,
And golden apples used to grow
  To mellow ripeness there for me.
The tree was low; its drooping limbs
  Hung like an arbor's draperies,
And green leaves, crooning balmy hymns,
  Lured to its depths of shady ease.

In May the ancient tree was white
  With tender blooms, and sight and sense
Drunk deep of promise of delight
  In summer's juicy opulence.
And as the lolling days grew warm
  The young fruit of seductive green
Found refuge in my grateful form,
  And worked there, deadly and unseen.

But all the trials were forgot,
  When, bursting full of lusciousness,
The golden apples came, with not
  The faintest menace of distress.

The hornets thronged their broken parts,
  The bluejays pecked them on the tree;
But in each apple's heart of hearts
  A "honey-core" remained for me.

ENVOY

Good friend, life's promise oft is white,
  The unripe fruit may cause distress;
But harvest-time will make it right —
  You 'll find a "honey-core," I guess.

On Sunday Morn

On Sunday morn, down sacred aisle,
I see you passing, fair and proud,
With queenly head sedately bowed,
And eyes deep-veiled; and can you smile,
O lady of the dusk defile?

'T is wisdom for a little while
To leave the glitter and the crowd,
To put aside the Tempter's wile
On Sunday morn.

Yet, though you strive to reconcile
Youth's frolic heart to sober-browed
Devotion, still you must beguile,
For Cupid all but laughs aloud,
About your lips, demure exile,
On Sunday morn!

An Appeal

Dear critics, do not criticise
Too harshly, for the arrant wise
  May ape the rashness of the fool,
  And, damning by too stern a rule,
Make rank injustice wear the guise
Of right. Thus fortune oft denies
A just reward to him who tries
  With effort greater than you cool,
    Dear critics do.

It may be that Diana's eyes,
Young Chloe's cheek and Juliet's sighs
  Are subjects trite, save in the school
  Where love makes youth its pliant tool;
But be benign and sympathize,
    Dear critics, do!

Come Kiss Me, Dear

Come kiss me, dear — a little play
Like this improves the brightest day.
  Nay, do not fear! No one will tell,
  Nor miss the kiss you kiss so well.
'T is charming, sweet; but run away,
My little love. Another? Stay!
I fear you 'll lead me quite astray.
  And yet, for Eve old Adam fell —
    Come kiss me, dear!

Alas, I am but common clay,
And victim of a siren's sway!
  Nay, dearest, I do not rebel —
  Your sweet caresses quite excel —
So I, your doting parent, say:
    "Come kiss me, dear."

Behind the Scenes

Behind the scenes! What secrets dwell
Beneath the tinsel and the spell,
  The mimic glory of the stage,
  That thrills the crowd! Othello's rage,
Insane Lear's mouthings, or the fell
Complaints of Hamlet, scarce excel
The tragedies no words may tell;
  The griefs no encores may assuage,
    Behind the scenes!

There "properties" lie heaped, pell-mell,
Whose grewsome shapes and shadows quell
  The heart of youth, the hopes of age,
  With terrors that no one may gauge,
Save he who threads the gloomy cell
    Behind the scenes!

Be Wise in Time

Be wise in time, nor seek delay
When duty shows the rightful way,
  And let both heart and conscience tell
  Where honor calls and what is well;
For those who shirk the right to-day
Too soon will find life's aims astray,
And learn that one small error may
  All peace or happiness dispel —
    Be wise in time!

Be wise when impulse would betray
To action that would bring dismay
  Into the life — be brave and quell
  The wayward mood — strive to excel
In all that virtue might essay —
    Be wise in time!

With Rod and Reel

With rod and reel the toiler plays,
And dreams of long vacation days
  When he shall float on grassy deeps
  And cast the gleaming lure that sweeps
Athwart the hungry bass's gaze.

Once more he scorns the careful phrase,
The irksome yoke of urban ways,
  And scents the joy the sportsman reaps
                With rod and reel.

He sees far, forest-girted bays
Reflect dawn's iridescent grays;
  For there he knows the fierce bass keeps
  A constant vigil — there it leaps
And takes the lures the sportsmen raise
                With rod and reel.

When One Is Old

When one is old one may forget
The ills that sear the heart and fret
  The soul; old age may reconcile
  Griefs that exalt, joys that defile,
And loves that leave the eyelids wet.

Along life's backward track are set
Gray crossway signals marked "Regret,"
  At which dim eyes may gaze and smile,
    When one is old!

How base will seem the quest we let
Consume the years! The minaret
  Of fame's white temple, afterwhile,
  Will crown a lonely burial pile;
And thus success and dust are met
    When one is old.

In After Years

In after years, when age has taught
The heart to shield itself by thought,
  When life's highway seems more secure,
  And idle dreams cease to allure,
Ah! then perchance the joy we sought
Will come to us, in vestments wrought
Of wisdom, patience, peace, and naught
  But blissfulness shall then endure,
                In after years.

If friends depart; if hopes are brought
To nothingness; if battles fought
  End in distress, and griefs immure
  The heart and will — then seek the cure
That time may bring, nor fear you aught
                In after years.

O Rose of June

O rose of June! In humble guise
You meet the idle stroller's eyes
  By pathways sweet with summer's balm
  Of fragrant and florescent calm,
Pink-tipped and placid moorland prize!

At dewy dawn's first blush you rise
To greet the day's sweet enterprise
  With perfume sacred as a psalm,
                O rose of June!

Had I the wisdom of the wise,
Dear rose, I would immortalize
  You, coral blossom in my palm,
  With song to soothe away the qualm
Of toil—with roseate melodies,
                O rose of June!

A Duplicate Game

A game of whist? Who could resist
The challenge bold when you insist?
And yet I 'm told that, entre nous,
You always hold a trick or two
Unknown to your antagonist.

I own I am no analyst
Of maiden's ways, nor grasp the gist
Of half their plays — thus I may rue
A game of whist.

But, like an ardent optimist,
I 'll give the wheel of chance a twist;
I 'll play my hand — and would it do
To try to win your hand from you
If hearts be trumps? Do you persist —
A game of whist?

The Social Swim

The social swim! You know the rules—
A race for fortunes, flirts and fools;
  For men who mock and maids who tease,
  And where, at last, the least of these
May gain the prize and win the pools.

The game is taught in many schools
Where fashion finds too willing tools,
  And folly swears that fate decrees
    The social swim.

Don't cool your heels in vestibules
And think you're "in"; the wooden stools
  Of humble hearths, the pipes and cheese
  Of comradeship, will better please;
Who knows it best most ridicules
    The social swim.

To You I Turn

To you I turn in time of stress
And sue, dear love, for that caress
  Whose subtle art doth vanquish care
  And change the gloom of cold despair
To fragrant bloom and sunniness.

If fortune brings to me success
I cannot wholly acquiesce
  Until, with heart as light as air,
    To you I turn.

Thus, it the Fates despise or bless,
One prize I know that I possess
  Which makes all seasons debonair,
  For which all else I would forswear;
And so, to-day, O heart's Princess,
    To you I turn!

In Lenten Garb

In Lenten garb — unlovely gray —
Pale March pursues her mournful way,
  Save that her skies sometimes put by
  Their veiling mists, and sunbeams try
To paint the promises of May.

With sober mien and like array
Doth rosy Katherine essay
  Her lively traits to modify —
    In Lenten garb.

She does it well, but smiles will play
About her dainty lips and stray
  Upward until her eyes belie
  Her saintly guise, and prophesy
That she — like spring — will not delay
    In Lenten garb.

When One Is Young

When one is young what matters care?
For youth has mirth and joy to spare.
The future is a blazing fire
That lights the pathway of desire,
And doing 's but a name for dare.

What smiling masks the grim fates wear,
How amiable and debonair!
The best seems easy to acquire
When one is young.

Youth is a multimillionaire
Who fattens on the best of fare;
Whom all delights and naught can tire;
Who treats the world as his empire.
But old age sets its fatal snare
When one is young.

The Rush and Whirl

The rush and whirl of urban ways
Too often rack the nerves and daze
  The brain with ceaseless change and din;
  Too often kill ere hope can win
Ambition's prize of pelf or praise.

And yet we chafe at small delays,
And fiercely dash through workful days,
  To be, at last, extinguished in
    The rush and whirl.

For me a rustic hearth and blaze,
My pipe, my dog, a book of lays,
  And love, to soothe a chance chagrin,
  And I will be Contentment's twin,
And jeer with mirthful laugh and phrase
    The rush and whirl!

To Make One Song

To make one song whose simple strain
Shall soothe the sad heart's secret pain,
And leave a balm of gladness where
Had lurked the poison of despair;
Ah! who would not for that refrain
Give over glory's fair domain,
And all the greedy gold of gain?
If this its gift, who would forbear
To make one song?

To make one song the wearied brain
Shall welcome and shall aye retain
As something ever sweet and fair
To still the deadly throb of care!
What higher meed could worth attain—
To make one song?

The Backward Look

Back through the years, still unresigned,
We seek for joys long left behind
  Unwittingly; we cry aloud
  And call the one lost in the crowd
Back where the happy pathways wind.

We look in olden nooks entwined
By autumn's fading vines to find
  A loved one's face — we see a shroud,
    Back through the years.

Pursuing Life's unending grind,
We've worked, we've wept, we've loved, we've
    dined;
  We've fought, and many times been cowed;
  We've broken half the oaths we vowed —
Yet still we search with eager mind
    Back through the years.

A Good Cigar

A good cigar, long, brown, and fat,
Is nothing to be marveled at;
  And yet within its russet shell
  What wonder-working secrets dwell,
What close-coiled, soothing fancies that,
Freed in the smoke, life's ills combat
Successfully, till cares that sat
  Astride the mind are lost in —well,
    A good cigar.

How soon it prompts a social chat
When cronies barter tit for tat
  Or tales of strange adventure tell!
  What single blessing can excel
Grim trouble's blissful burning-ghat —
    A good cigar?

SONNETS

Sleep

Come, Sleep, thou languid, lovely child of night,
  Deep-eyed and luring in thy tenderness!
  Come, close the tired eyes with soft caress
And woo the mind to dreams of still delight!
But yesterday I saw you kiss the white,
  Drawn features of a woman in distress;
  And then she smiled, forgetful of duress,
It seemed, and drifting to joy's cloudless height.

And this thy gift, O drowsy god of dusk!
  To for a space make sensate things a dream
  Forgot; to give the fancy form and keep
The soul in visions, making life a husk
  Too mean for use; to bring a sacred gleam
  Of heaven into care's domain, O Sleep!

At Eighty Years

At eighty years the sun of life hangs low,
An even-song croons slowly in the heart;
No more the footsteps seek the noisy mart;
No more the brave arm strikes an ardent blow
In sturdy toil, but in the afterglow
Of time and chance Old Age, serene, apart
From all ambition's crucifying art,
Waits, dreaming, for the dawn across the snow.
At eighty years! What mysteries of strife
And strength, of service done, those years enfold;
Of unbelief made faith, of joy and tears,
Desires wrecked, or wrought to crown the life!
At last the calm; a loved one's hand to hold—
Then death to hallow all, at eighty years.

A Trust I Keep

A trust I keep, which time may not efface—
To delve deep into life in search of gold
Of purest heart, and virtues manifold,
And through the unrelenting years to trace
The vein of truth and find the hiding-place
Of love's pure gem; to break away the cold
And skeptic crust obscuring faith; to mold
Of common clay a form of noble grace!

Behold, my hands are weak, my sight unsure,
And as I strive the task grows doubly great,
The treasure found unlusterful and small;
Yet he who gains the prize must all endure;
Must labor unremittingly, and wait—
With thankful heart that he may strive at all!

Jack Frost

Ho! ancient friend and honest peddler, Jack,
With ruddy face and beard of snowy cast,
What cheerful ventures since we saw you last?
What trinkets nestle in that bulging pack?
Good sooth! We 're glad to see you tripping back,
Although your gay lips blow a wintry blast,
Most cheering rogue and quaint enthusiast!
Come, have you brought a New Year's almanac?

Expose your wares; I see some tonics there
To paint the cheeks of youth and age with rose;
Some tinsel of the mist, as light as air,
And curtains woven of translucent snows —
But stay, good friend; I 'll take that lively scene
Of boys snowballing on the village green!

Labor

Come to me, comrade dear, physician, friend
With face austere, and hands that show the seal
Of hardy toil, and shoulders wont to feel
The honest burdens' weight; with balms that mend
The miseries of life — its wounds — and lend
The blessings of forgetfulness to heal
The maladies of heart and brain, and steal
From grief its sting and joy its bitter end.

When first we met I spurned the yoke you brought,
And looked upon you as a tyrant sent
To crush me with an unjust punishment;
But now your yoke protects me like a shield,
O Labor! and your blessings are revealed
As rarer than the stone the ancients sought.

To the First Robin

O robin, sing your first spring song to me!
  Since autumn trailed her scarlet robes in dust,
  And in her hapless passion, burned with rust
The ripened fields, I've looked in every tree,
In every bush that plumes above the lea,
  For you, dear friend with umber-tinted bust!
  And through the frigid months, with cheerful trust
I've waited for your vernal jubilee,
Till now, at last, where yet the snowy foam
  Of winter tempests flecks the chastened lawn,
    I see you standing, triumph-voiced and strong,
With keen bill prodding in the grassy loam!—
  Sweet songster with the breast like russet dawn,
    Mount yonder tree and carol me a song!

Calliope

Chief of the Muses — great Calliope!
Where is thy idle stylus hid to-day —
That rod, whose grand, immortalizing sway
Held Homer's hand in trust as honor's fee?
And has thy tuba lost its ancient free
And ample eloquence? Forsooth! the bray
Of modern orators is puppet play —
The loon's call hooting by life's raging sea!

And yet, I heard a locomotive roar
Across the almost boundless plain; its voice
Spake with prophetic power, thus: "Rejoice!
I carry progress to the farthest shore."
Perchance thy epic staves and eloquence
Thus mask in modern processes immense.

Erato

Dear muse, the sweetest of the potent nine,
Whose fingers play upon the hearts of men
Until their ardent chords respond again,
Thrilling with love-lorn melody divine,
Methinks I hear a tender note of thine
Drift from the falling autumn leaves, and when
The woodbine bares its scarlet face — ah! then
I know that love has mocked the summer shine.

Each chaliced blossom is a votive shrine
Where nature spreads her fairest gifts for thee;
Each dewy blade that sparkles on the lea
A sacred reliquary crystalline
That holds the secret of thy tender spell,
And makes us love thee and thy numbers well.

Terpsichore

The dancing muse! I saw her moving through
A forest, where an autumn zephyr played;
Her steps were lighter than the leaves that strayed
Like waifs of summer, lost where twilight drew
A shadow-net about them, and the blue
Of heaven twinkled where high branches made
A shifting masquerade of sheen and shade
That mocked the rhythm of a faint tattoo.
And as I watched the airy muse advance,
A wreath of laurel on her tresses set,
Like emeralds in a golden coronet,
Methought the wildwood joined her in the dance,
And every leaf and bird and living thing
Burst forth in songs of reawakened spring.

Euterpe

Muse of the mystic flute and purling stream,
In nature's fairest summer garlands drest,
I saw a wild bird resting on thy breast —
A wan dove, crooning in a midday dream;
So strangely sweet the song, I knew its theme
Was mother-love within a downy nest;
And then I knew it mocked the tenderest
Of all thy golden bursts of song supreme.

I saw two lordly stags in deathful fight;
The rasp of clashing antlers, and the cries
Of rage for conquest shuddered to the skies —
A grand, primeval anthem voicing Might;
And then, O muse! I bowed before thy power
That speaks the tempest or the lisping flower.

Thalia

Since first you crowned the rustic's vernal feast,
O muse! with laughter and your comic art,
And in the rural pastimes bore your part
With broadest jest and mirth that aye increased,
Your sway has traveled from the classic East
To banter care and fill the throbbing mart
Of tragic life with whims and quirks that start
The pulse to thrill with joy where joy had ceased.

Behold! To-day your crook and grinning mask
Are greeted as if royal tokens sent
To end the sordid soul's imprisonment
And gild with wit the plodder's weary task;
To make despair the laggard's scourge, at most,
And fortune's fiercest fling a futile boast.

Clio

Hail, goddess! Queen of time's renowned estate,
On whose fair brow the deathless laurel shines,
And for whose smile the proudest mortal pines
With ardor ceaseless and insatiate.
When Cæsar dared the sorcery of fate
And outlined with his sword the world's confines
He worshiped at thy glory-gilded shrines —
Grand relics, then, of ages old and great.

Ah! could the memoirs thy papyrus scrolls
Retain be stamped upon the souls of men,
Perhaps thy smile were not so witching then,
And few would perish in ambition's shoals.
But now thy trumpet sounds a glad refrain,
And man, for love of thee, forgets his pain!

Broken Bonds

Released! released! Yes, broken is the chain
  Which held the slavish heart in such duress
  That all but love seemed less than nothingness,
And hell lurked in a woman's least disdain,
  And heaven linked itself with her caress!
An end, at last, to vows that plight in vain
And make a mockery of love to gain
  Pride's pitiable fee — or something less!
  An end to explanations which confess
The meagerness of human trust, and drain
The very founts of confidence — and pain!
  An end to joys and tortures none can guess
Save he who struggles for love's sunlit height
And gains, instead, scorn's stormy crags and night!

The Mask of Mirth

Ho! this is Mirth, fat-cheeked and laughing-eyed,
  And wide of mouth where impish dimples lurk
  In playful negligence — content to shirk
The earnestness and sober sense of pride,
And prank about gay lips that oft divide
  In grins that ripple with content and smirk
  Of perfect joy or sly, satiric quirk
That smacks of roguishness personified.
And is this not the best — to make a jest
  Of life and sweep the veil of sorrow by;
  To steep the soul in mirthful carelessness,
And turn unheeding ears to care's behest,
  Ambition's strident call or sweet love's sigh?
  Ah, Mirth, a truce; that grin may mask distress!

Woodland June

Yes, June is quite an idle elf, I think,
Companion of Dan Cupid and the rest
Of wayward fays who make a merry jest
Of pain, and fan their wings upon the brink
Of woodland stream and pool, where shy nymphs drink
And bathe at dusk, then romp away in quest
Of fireflies that blink in mute protest
Their dingy lights, 'twixt earth and sky, or sink
To refuge where the long grass intertwines
Above its carpeting of russet moss.
June loves these scenes of sylvan shade, and so,
With pink limbs stretched in languidness, reclines
On some proud fern that, swaying, leans across
A twinkling brook where Pan is piping low.

October

The pippins swinging on the bending boughs,
Like rosy children, nod among the leaves;
While in the tree's shorn top a robin grieves
And croons faint echoes of his springtime vows.
From far afield the home-returning cows
Moo low as lost in strange soliloquies.
The dry grass murmurs like far-distant seas.
The hillside masquerades its purple brows
In brilliant foliage, whose sunset hues
Recall the blossoms of departed June.
Upon the cottage porch, where Summer twined
Her garlands, and now whispers her adieux,
A red-cheeked maiden hums a mellow tune,
Her gold hair tossing in the autumn wind.

NATURE

Midsummer Days

When roses bloom in wayside nooks
And summer dreams where drowsy brooks
Blink lazily in shifting shade
Of listless leaves; when ripples wade
Through glossy waves of streamside grass
With languid sighs, and zephyrs pass
Like phantom songs through dusky woods,
Filling the perfumed solitudes
With deep, entrancing restfulness —
Then would we flee the toil and stress
Of labor days to seek the ease
And midday twilight of the trees.

In dreamful nooks when roses bloom
And locusts ravel from the gloom
Of maple tops an aimless chime,
Outfloating like a wisp of time

Clipped from the distaff of the Fates
And loosed to drift to chance estates —
Then, sailing with this strand of song,
The fancy wanders where a throng
Of restful visions, calm and pure,
To scenes of perfect peace allure,
And care becomes a minor chord
That thrills a hymn to nature's Lord!

When roses bloom and summer smiles
From all her fragrant, flowered miles
Seductively, and so invites
To her still, sensuous delights
Half hid in gauzy draperies
Of shade and sheen in lisping seas
Of green, dim woods; when from a zone
Of blossom gold a monotone
Ripe with content flows like a psalm
Of joy serene, a holy calm
Laves thought and soul in sacred rest,
And sorrow sleeps on nature's breast.

In dreamland nooks, O friend! regain
The joy of life — forget the vain
And fierce pursuit of sordid things
And all the mad world's buffetings.
When roses bloom the gilded bee
Reigns in a flower throne, and she

Nature

Hums blithely songs of bloom and shine
And sips of sacramental wine
No rarer than who wills may sip
With thirsty heart and thankful lip
Within the shadow-arbored ways
Of restful, ripe midsummer days.

Rondel

Scarlet and gold the leaves are turning,
And gray are the days, for the year is old,
And chill is the heart, for the ways are cold,
While the year lies low with its death-lights burning.

Chill as the snow, the north wind spurning,
Shudders the dusk when the dawns unfold;
Scarlet and gold the leaves are turning,
And gray are the days, for the year is old.

And the wildwood sings with a voice of mourning,
And the wood-bird wings to a new freehold;
And a dream of the June, like a tale new-told,
Dimmeth the eyes with a mist of yearning.
Scarlet and gold the leaves are turning,
And gray are the days, for the year is old.

Song of the Thistledrift

Gay is my heart as
  The blooms in the June light —
Sailing apart as
  Light as a fairy,
Dancing and merry;
  Bright as an airy
  Sprite of the moonlight;
Just a contrary
  Waif of the noonlight.

Over the treetops
  I drift in an aimless
Course where I see tops
  Gold as the sun is —
Red as a flame is,
  Or a stray one is
  Tinged with a nameless
Hue; and my game is
  Idle and blameless.

Nature

Still, though I wander,
  With nothing to hold me,
Hither and yonder,
  A prize I carry —
Fair Nature's dower —
  And may not tarry
  Till earth shall enfold me,
And into a flower
  Beautiful mold me.

The Lost Butterfly

Like some rare flower endowed
  With conscious freedom, vying
  With the wind, I see thee flying
Above the crowd,
  O strayed exotic of the wilderness!
  In this long hour of thy distress,
Confined between the lofty towers
  Of noisy trade,
Seeking the green and bloom of bowers
  From whence thou 'st strayed,
Thy frail wings grow dull,
  Lost butterfly.

Their movements lull,
  And then I see thee rise
Above the gibbering street,
As if thou wouldst retreat
  To the sweet immortal skies.
But thy broken sails are weak,
Nor may they help thee seek
  Thy lost paradise.
Thy sad hour shalt thou fight
In vain, despairing flight,
  Then fall and die. * * *
Blooms on the world of fragrant things,
And in the grass the cricket sings!

So man, frail man, shall struggle upward, too,
Longing to scan some soul-remembered view,
And then shall fall and die at last, like you.
  But far afield, perhaps, his spirit hears
  The welcome music of immortal years.

When the Cows Come Home

"Clink, clink, clink-clink, a-clinkety-clink" —
Through the ragged brush of the pasture path,
And the "old boss" stops at the brook to drink,
And tosses her head with a jest of wrath.
With hoofs sunk deep in the brook's black loam,
And muzzle deep in the lazy stream,
She waits for the laggard herd to come,
With ears that droop and eyes that dream.
Her sleek sides bulge with contentedness,
And her udders drip with an overflow
That blotches with white the water cress
That sags with the current, to and fro.

The eddies whirl where her long tail flings
Its tufted end with a listless toss,
And the gurgling water swings and sings
Like whirling wings in the brookside moss.
As the water clears of its muddy rile
And the old boss drinks, with nostrils flared,
The dusk, slow stealing, mile on mile,
Grows dark where the deep woods stand ensnared

On the east horizon's farthest rim,
And out of the twilight's hazy height,
Where the Dog Star loiters, white and dim,
A drifting swallow pipes good-night.

Then, drowsily, with a soul-deep breath,
The old boss raises her head and sighs,
And bright as a sword from its guarding sheath,
The sunset gleams in her glowing eyes.
It turns the bell at her throat to gold
And silvers the red of her silken coat,
And the telltale leaves of the year grown old
Turn pale in the pools where they lie afloat.
Out of the silence, shrill and high,
A voice of the farm-yard quavers through:
"Come, boss! Come, boss! Come, boss!" its cry,
And the old boss softly answers, "Moo!"

Only the call of the cow — that 's all;
Only a wistful moo, and yet
It seems that I heard my childhood call —
And the dusk is here and my eyes are wet.

Chant of the Spring Rain

Rain like the rustling of fine garments —
Luminous, whispering rain;
Voice of the Spring, sibilant and frail.
Rain like the fluttering of wings —
The glad sigh of Nature awakened.
Rain with the song of waving corn
And the murmur of blossoming trees;
Voice of the meadow-lands a-tremble;
Voice of the rushes quivering;
Voice of God to the hosts of Life.

Rain with the sob of the wandering stream,
Telling the tale of the great gray seas.
Rain of the tempest spent and joy to come —
The baptism of regeneration
From the fountain of youth perennial;
Pitiful, quickening tears of the Most High!

Rain that speaks to my heart,
Speaks with the voice of my dear love
And whispers: "Peace, peace;
For above the clouds the sunshine
And after the rain the radiance;
And this is life and its mystery!"

In the Fading Year

The goldenrod is nodding to the asters by the road.
Out across the sandy reaches where the grass is flaming up
Into orange-yellow torches, flaring autumn's signal code,
Still the milkweed pours its treasure from an overflowing cup.

The jewel-blossomed gentian hides in the willow brake,
And the dial-faced sunflowers, turning ever toward the sun,
Beam in slowly fading splendor, seeming sadly loth to make
Their adieus and bend their slender stalks in parting benison.

The elms are growing weary with the waning of the year,
While their leaves, like tears of sorrow, drop reluctantly to earth,
And their haggard branches totter, looming somber and severe
As they moan of joys departed and of winter's cold and dearth.

Nature

In the oaks the squirrels worry, up among the burnished leaves,
Which hang stiff like ancient parchments soiled by summer's careless hands,
And a warble trembles through them as a bird belated grieves
While it pauses in its lonesome pilgrimage to warmer lands.

Listen! don't you hear the patter of the dry leaves as they pass?
Hear them treading where the maple spreads its mantle on the grass?
All the early year and onward I beheld them grow and glow,
Each with its peculiar beauty shining in the vernal show.

Faded all, they fall to nourish blossoms of a fairer day;
Thus again their worth shall flourish into beauty by the way.
So again, oh friend! shall prosper every fair and noble deed,
Making lives leaf out in kindness as the fruitful days proceed.

At Sunset

The robin warbles in the dusk,
  The sunset strews its fading fire,
And like the kernel in the husk
  Rests in my heart a ripe desire;
The secret of the songster's strain,
  The magic of the embered west —
Ah, could I name the sweet bird's pain
  And know whereof the sun's unrest!

The robin's mate in silence waits
  The coming of the fledgling brood
And night at heaven's flaming gates
  Sits through the twilight interlude;
But over all a mist of tears
  Intangible, the majesty
Of mighty grief through countless years,
  Seems cast, and chills the soul of me.

Moan in the dusk, O gentle bird!
  The sorrows of the world arise,
And ev'ry trembling leaf is stirred
  With nature's sympathetic sighs;

Nature

Day bares its stricken heart, and bleeds;
  Night, with a nameless sorrow weak,
Droops like a widow in new weeds,
  And death breathes coldly on her cheek.

Still in my heart the will to know
  Rests like the kernel in the husk;
How shall it germinate and grow
  To rise above life's troubled dusk?
Immortal One, teach me the way,
  Give me the skill! Give me the skill
To read the wondrous night and day
  And know the glories of Thy will.

Gay Spring Returns

Gay Spring returns, her glad face glowing
With the winsome smile of a year ago,
And again in accents sweet and low
She murmurs of wilds where her blooms are growing.

She rustles the folds of her garments, showing
A splendor of draperies new; and so
Gay Spring returns, her glad face glowing
With the winsome smile of a year ago.

In her hand is a lilac bough o'erflowing
With billows of odorous bloom; but, oh!
Its green leaves lisp with a sense of woe,
For flowers must fade and Spring be going—
Gay Spring returns, her glad face glowing.

Spring Comes A-Calling

Spring knocks at the door of the year and cries:
"I want to come in! I've a song for you;
I've a kirtle green and a bonnet blue,
And jewels of dew to dazzle your eyes.

"I know where the first shy violet lies
In its cradle of moss — and the May bloom, too!
I've a basket full of the flowers you prize,
And fresh as the dawn when the world was new.

"I've a charm that dropped from the autumn skies
Of the year agone, and with magic true
'T will gild the fields where the gold wheat grew,
And make you happy and wealthy and wise!"
Spring knocks at the door of the year and cries:
"I want to come in! I've a song for you!"

The Spring Fever

There 's a witchery to the winds that shiver so
In against the leafless bushes and the snow,
  And each gusty spirit-wing
  Of the breezes seems to sing
Of the coming of the spring, spring, SPRING!

Now the bronze buds of the willows swell and glow,
And the silver-throated birches whisper low
  That the violets that quake
  Half asleep beside the brake
Soon will blossom wide awake, wide awake!

Hear the early bluebird pipe his morning lay!
He 's a uniformed young captain of the day;
  He 's a soldier without fear,
  Heralding the bloom and cheer
Of the spring and all the fruitage of the year.

Hurry, winter, we beseech you, haste away!
For we long to see the clover-bloom at play
  With the teasing tousled bees,
  And we long to lounge at ease
Underneath the sleepy-headed summer trees.

BITS OF CHILDHOOD

Sleep Song

Dear little blue-eyes, go to sleep!
The twilight shadows are knee-deep;
  The sun gone down behind the town,
  And from the hilltop's silver crown
A faint, far day-star seems to peep.

The green lawn twinkles bright with dew,
The treetops whisper low to you:
  "Sleep, little one; the day is done;
  Sleep till the rising of the sun!"
Sleep, love, and close your eyes of blue.

Winter Butterflies

The snowflakes flutter all around,
Or drop to rest upon the ground,
And if you see them with my eyes
You 'll know they are white butterflies
That float from sunny fields above
To visit boys and girls they love.

Fairy Castles

Upon my window-pane at night
Come fairy pictures, painted white,
And when I get up with the sun
The shining paintings are all done.
I see a marble castle there,
And to it leads a silver stair,
And at the stairway's top I see
Somebody beckoning to me.

Sleep Song of Motherhood

Little one — little one — child of my breast,
First-born of thy father, drowse to thy rest.
Over the trail of the rose-tinted west
Steals the red sun to its under-world nest.
Warm on my heart is the pulse of thy love;
Soft on my cheek is the breathing thereof—
Tight must I hold thee till dawning of day,
Else the Night Watcher might bear thee away.

Little one, sleep, or the night will repine
While the Dream Singers wait for this wee one of mine.
E'en now a low lullaby calls from the shade,
And bids thee, my precious one, be not afraid.
Hush! — list to the song of the stars as they cling
In the arms of the night where they drowsily swing
And twinkle their love to thee now, as I sing
My crooning sleep song to thee, rapturous Thing!

The First Year

The year is nearly gone, my child,
  Your only year, or rather,
Four months have passed since first you smiled
  Upon your blushing father.
The nurse scoffs at my unctuous claim
  That you in infant frolic
Grinned at your dad; she vows that same
  Grin meant a touch of colic.

When babes are new, so I am told,
  Life bores them out of measure;
I know some "babies" gray and old
  Who don't find life all pleasure.
You were a solemn little chap
  When we became acquainted;
I dubbed you saint and watched you nap—
  You 're not as fair as painted.

What lonely nights we walked the floor!
  'T was I did all the walking.
And how you bawled! and how I swore—
  And set the neighbors talking!

No doubt your voice will ring, some day,
Full eloquent and pure;
But don't be so ambitious, pray,
While yet so immature.

Still, darling infant, you are fair,
Though ofttimes passing doleful;
You look a cherub lying there,
With eyes so big and soulful.
If chance we spank your nether parts
And often seem to flout you —
Why, brightest jewel of our hearts,
We couldn't do without you!

Star Tracks

Alone in bed at night I lie
And watch the stars that dot the sky;
They are so yellow and so bright
I call them daisies of the night.

When day returns I step abroad
To view the wondrous works of God,
And yellow daisies, as I pass,
Shine out like stars upon the grass.

The Toy Soldier's Valentine

It was Valentine day and the toy folk were gay;
But the little toy soldier was blue as could be,
For his heart was of lead, and he stood on his head
In a crack of the nursery floor, you see!
He had fallen that way, and in love, too, they say,
When the yellow-haired baby had asked him to play;
And from that day to this he had longed for the bliss
Of a kiss from that dimpled and rosy young miss.

But who ever heard of a dear little bird
Of a baby a-kissing toy soldiers — did you?
So the rubber doll laughed and the Noah's ark chaffed,
And the calico kitten said "Me-ow-oo'!"
And they all of them ran to the toy-soldier man
And said: "Run away with the girl if you can!"
Now, this is too bad, for the toy soldier had
Lost both his legs in a battle — poor lad!

But the big, golden Sun, he had seen all the fun
That was made of the little toy soldier, and he
Just made up his mind that the others should find —
Well, something, I think you 'll agree;

For he sent a sunbeam with a dazzling gleam
To glow on the little toy soldier, full stream,
Till the dear fellow shone with a brightness, I'll own,
As glowing as any that ever was known.

And then, pretty soon, I should say, about noon,
The yellow-haired baby appeared in the door;
And standing right there, first thing, I declare!
She saw the toy soldier ashine on the floor.
Then what do you think? As quick as a wink,
She caught the toy soldier and kissed him, ker-plink!
So without more ado the frolicksome two
Ran away with each other. I'm glad, are n't you?

When Mary Sings

When Mary sings it seems a faint,
Fond echo of some far bird's plaint,
  Some song of love and past delight
  From twilight grove or azure height
  Comes dreamily in drifting flight
To me, and brings, on drowsy wings,
Spring's luring, lulling murmurings,
  Despite the wind-worn winter's night,
    When Mary sings.

When Mary sings, to-night, her quaint
Child music croons, in sweet restraint,
  Soft slumber tunes, whose tones unite
  The mother's runes with ditties, light
  As infant fancies can incite.
Before the blaze she sways and swings
Her cradled dolls, and round her clings
  The glory of a sacred rite,
    When Mary sings.

The Nursery Sage

I know a quaint philosopher
Who muses all day long,
Whose earnest utterances are
Exceeding plain and strong.
He seems assured that midnight is
The season to expound,
And then — the fact I must admit! —
His arguments are sound.

This wee Philosopher ignores
The "question of the hour,"
Except that of hygienic food,
Which same he doth devour.
He hath a scientific turn
Of mind, I 'm free to say —
A simple astronomic taste:
He loves the Milky Way.

Although he hath abundant health,
A nurse is always near
To minister to each small need
Of this Philosopher.

He seems to long to walk abroad,
  And often he begins,
But heavens! you should hear him howl
  When he gets on his pins!

This young Philosopher I know
  Is from a foreign land,
And speaks a language that I fain
  Would speak or understand.
My clever wife, however, can
  Translate his "Googly-goo!"
And vows it means "mamma," of course,
  Just as all mothers do!

I lay no claim to learning great,
  And yet my heart insists
That when my infant son gets red
  And doubles up his fists,
And googles to articulate
  A name, the boy is mad
Because he cannot quite command
  That fond expression — DAD!

Going Away

Oh, Josephine Gray, are you going away?
  Then I know why the flowers are fading;
Why the leaves of the trees die so, and the seas
  Of dry grasses are ever upbraiding;
Why the sad monotone of the air is a moan
  Like the groan of a lone child sobbing;
Why the song of the bird of gay spring is unheard,
  And my temples with trouble are throbbing.

In the bloom of the year you came to me, dear,
  With the glory of summer about you;
But in gloom the parade of all nature must fade,
  For it cannot have pleasance without you!
Ah! the chill at my heart, and its storm, is a part
  Of the winter that comes at your leaving,
And the moan of the air is my echoed despair,
  And the plaint of the grass is my grieving!

Sweet Josephine Gray, little maid, won't you stay?
  For I dote on your prattle and laughter,
And in it I hark to the song of a lark
  Of a light heart that flutters long after.

Come, stay! And whatever the weather we 'll never
See aught but the sunshine you make us
With the smile of your sweet little face and the wile
Of a joy that shall never forsake us!

Army Diet

My father says 'at sojers is
The braves' mens 'at ever was;
'At when they hears the shots go "Whiz!"
They don't mind it a bit, bekuz
The whiz means 'at you ain't got hit,
An' so they 'ist don't keer a bit.

Pa says 'at sojers knows a lot,
An' they can walk "'ist like one man."
An' aim so well 'at every shot
Will hit a sneakin' Spaniard, an'
He says they have to eat "hard tacks"
An' carry "raccoons" on their backs.

But when I ast him why they do
He 'ist busts out a-laughin', nen
He says, "You know a thing or two,
My son!" an' laughs an' laughs again.
An' says "'At 's 'ist the very thing—
The sojers eats the tax, 'I jing!"

A New Woman

Spring blossoms with a world of eyes,
  My wee girl has but two;
But oh! a world of beauty lies
  Within those eyes of blue.

The high hills hold vast hoards of gold,
  Both beautiful and rare;
But oh! it gleams in wealth untold
  Within my darling's hair.

The downy peach is pink and sleek,
  And sweet as ancient wine;
But sweeter is my darling's cheek
  When pressing close to mine.

She toddles to her papa's knee,
  Across the flowered floor,
And each bare footstep seems to me
  To leave one blossom more.

At the Sign of the Ginger Jar

Diana's silver sickle shows
  Upon the jeweled sky,
And underneath the long grass glows
  A twinkling firefly.

Fair day has gone to rest, my dear,
  She just put out her light,
And as you nestle close, I hear
  A drowsy, faint "Dood night!"

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